bfi

40p/$1.50

SIGHT AND SOUND

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY
SUMMER 1974

SATYAJIT RAY at the N. F. T.

CHOOSE YOUR OWN RAY SEASON FROM:—

The Unvanquished

THE PHILOSOPHER'S STONE

THE WORLD OF APU

THE MUSIC ROOM

THE GODDESS

TWO DAUGHTERS

MAHANAGAR

ADVENTURES OF GOOPY AND BAGHA

DAYS AND NIGHTS IN THE FOREST

THE ADVERSARY

Company Limited

All available on 16mm from:—

CONTEMPORARY FILMS LTD., 55 GREEK STREET, LONDON W1V 6DB (01-734 4901)

THE FILMS OF DIRK BOGARDE

by Margaret Hinxman and Susan d'Arcy, with an introduction by Joseph Losey

The book is fully illustrated with nearly 400 photographs and is the most comprehensive study yet published of Dirk Bogarde. A short biography is followed by cast lists, credits, synopses and critics' comments on every film he has made up to his latest, The Night Porter. Margaret Hinxman is the film critic for The Sunday Telegraph. Susan d'Arcy writes for Films Illustrated.

$11\frac{1}{4}'' \times 8\frac{3}{4}''$, 208 pages, nearly 400 photographs	£4.75
Paperback	£2.45

"Dirk has always been a courageous as well as a good actor. This excellent and welcome book traces his many-faceted career in a very readable manner. He has consistently been underestimated and hopefully the publication of this volume will redress the balance, for he has stayed at the top for a very long time—and nobody does that by accident or without real talent"

Bryan Forbes

LITERARY SERVICES & PRODUCTION LIMITED
2 Denbigh Close, London W11 2QH. Phone: 01-727 6412
U.K. Agents for Citadel Press (U.S.A.)

The Scottish Film Council announces

GLASGOW FILM THEATRE

A focal point for film in Scotland

NOW OPEN

The Glasgow Film Theatre will present systematic surveys of all aspects of cinema. The opening season centres on a full retrospective of the work of Ingmar Bergman.

All programmes are open to the public. Seasons are quarterly, beginning in October, January, April and July. Screenings are fully documented through programme notes and an illustrated brochure for each season.

Full details from:

Glasgow Film Theatre,
12 Rose Street,
Glasgow G3
041-332 6535

Scottish Film Council,
16-17 Woodside Terrace,
Glasgow G3 7XN
041-332 9988

Glasgow Film Theatre was established with the help of the British Film Institute and the Corporation of Glasgow.

10th Chicago International Film Festival

November 8-21

The world recognizes only one competitive international film festival in the United States ...and it's Chicago's.

For information write:
Michael J. Kutza, Jr.,
Festival Director
The Chicago International Film Festival
12 East Grand Avenue
Chicago, Illinois 60611
Cable: Cinefest

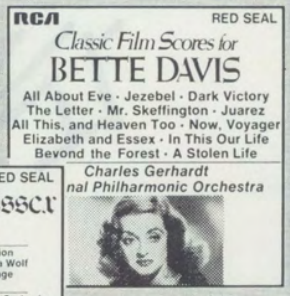
You must remember this...

ARL1-0422

SER 5664

and these...

ARL1-0184



ARL1-0183

SER 5695

ARL1-0185

ARL1-0452
Available end of May

Great Great Music from the Late Late Movies

RCA Records and Tapes

THE TANTIVY PRESS
108 NEW BOND STREET
LONDON W1Y 0QX

Tantivy Film Publications

THE CINEMA OF DAVID LEAN
by Gerald Pratley.
A film-by-film study of one of the world's greatest directors, this book covers all Lean's films from the early *In Which We Serve* and *Brief Encounter* to the more recent epics such as *Lawrence of Arabia*, *Dr. Zhivago* and *Ryan's Daughter*. Includes previously unpublished interview material and a special 30-page photographic GALLERY OF LEAN PLAYERS, featuring Lean's favourite actors.
Hardback £5.00

FILM DESIGN
compiled and edited by Terence St. John Marner.
The latest addition to the highly acclaimed Screen Textbooks Series, this book concentrates on all aspects of production and set design, with contributions from several leading art directors. Essential reading for the serious student of the cinema. Black and white and colour plates.
Paperback £1.50

COMING SOON

THE WAR FILM
by Ivan Butler.
A major new survey of one of the cinema's staple genres from the earliest days to *Patton*. Includes an invaluable checklist of films divided according to the particular war concerned. Over 100 stills.
To be published in the Summer. Hardback £3.50

THE HOLLYWOOD PROFESSIONALS, VOL. 2.
Wood, King and Milestone.
by Tony Thomas, Clive Denton and Kingsley Canham.
This trio of monographs throws the spotlight on Sam Wood, director of the Marx Brothers and *For Whom the Bell Tolls*; Henry King, who made *Tol'able David* in 1921, and in the fifties, the excellent *Twelve O'clock High* and *The Gunfighter*; and Lewis Milestone, director of *All Quiet on the Western Front* and *A Walk in the Sun*.
To be published in the Summer. Paperback £1.10

BORIS KARLOFF AND HIS FILMS
by Paul M. Jensen.
Though best known for his moving portrayal of the monster in *Frankenstein*, Karloff was in fact an actor of great versatility. The author has researched Karloff's entire career, spanning forty years and hundreds of films, and has come up with a wealth of detail. Includes pictures of Karloff in all his famous screen guises.
To be published in the Autumn. Hardback £3.75

THE SCREENPLAY AS LITERATURE
by Douglas Garrett Winston.
Working from a critical reading of screenplays and adopting the premise that film is an important narrative art, this work discusses the implications of such films as Bergman's *Wild Strawberries* and Bresson's *The Diary of a Country Priest*, and examines the significance of Eisenstein, Godard, Fellini and Antonioni, touching finally on the Underground movement. Illustrated.
To be published in July. Hardback £5.50

RECENT PUBLICATIONS

THE CINEMA OF ANDRZEJ WAJDA
by Boleslaw Michalek. Paperback £1.10

THE GRIFFITH ACTRESSES
by Anthony Slide. Hardback £3.75

THE ANIMATED FILM
by Ralph Stephenson. Paperback £1.10

THE CINEMA OF LUIS BUNUEL
by Freddy Buache. Paperback £1.05

Please write to us for a complete list of our books

pcl
The Polytechnic of Central London

School of Communication

Postgraduate Diploma in Film Studies

A two-year part-time evening course which is designed to give students a knowledge of the most important film styles, of the relations between systems of production, ideology and films, and of the current debates, experiments and practices in film-making, film theory and film criticism.

Attendance is for one evening each week for two years and for one study weekend in each term. In addition, students are expected to spend a further evening each week in private study.

Further details from The Admissions Officer (Dept. M2) The Polytechnic of Central London 309 Regent Street London W1R 8AL.

Film-making is easy
-with The Craft of Film

The loose-leaf manual that helps you to a better, earlier mastery of film-making. Lavishly illustrated in a fresh and novel style to show you how things are really done. Bound so you can take the pages you need with you on location, or add extra material of your own. "For the new-style film-maker who . . . is not prepared to hang around for five years," (Vincent Porter, *Film and TV Technician*). "Recommended to anyone interested in the use of film," (G F P Childs, *Visual Education*). "A large number of very clear line drawings . . . without fuss or over-elaboration," (Stanley Bowler, *Audio-Visual*). Send now for more details, or get your copy on 10-day free approval. Years of film-making experience, yours for £8.50.

Please send me more details of The Craft of Film.*

I enclose £8 plus 50p p&p. Send my copy of The Craft of Film.* I understand that if I am not completely satisfied I may return it within 10 days and my £8.50 will be returned immediately.

Name:

Address:

***Delete whichever does not apply.**

Ovum Ltd, 22 Grays Inn Road, London WC1

Independent Filmmaking

By LENNY LIPTON

Introduction by Stan Brakhage

Postscript by Malcolm Le Grice

You don't need a £1000 camera, a huge budget, and a lifetime's experience to make a successful film: that is the message of this book.

'What a relief to have, at last, the first book I can fully recommend to any filmmaker . . . I so much wish I'd had such a book as this when I started filmmaking' – **Stan Brakhage, in the introduction to *Independent Filmmaking***

440 pages, 284 illustrations, £1.95 paperback, £4.25 hardbound

Studio Vista

Seen Any Good Films Lately?

For anyone who is interested in the cinema membership of the **British Film Institute** is essential.

The National Film Archive, with its Viewing Service and Stills Collection, deals with the history of film.

The Information and Documentation services offer research and library facilities.

At the National Film Theatre on the South Bank you can see a wide range of films, hear film makers talking about their work and enjoy the riverside clubroom and restaurant.

If you live outside London, then there are over 40 Regional Film Theatres, assisted by the BFI.

Through the Film Availability Services you can hire and book films for your film society.

The Publications Department will keep you up-to-date through the quarterly Sight and Sound and the Monthly Film Bulletin.

And if you want to make your own film you can always apply to the Production Board for technical and financial assistance.

Further details of these activities and membership of the Institute from:

Membership Department
British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street,
London W1V 6AA. Tel: 01 437 4355 ext 42

bfi

THE LONDON FILM SCHOOL

The DIPLOMA COURSE is an intensive two-year workshop in professional film-making, during which "Art" and "Technique" are inseparable and most work is done in groups. Postgraduate in terms of maturity, it is not primarily academic; practical in the sense that it is based on the actual production of at least three films a year for every student, it is not merely an apprenticeship but requires a great deal of study.

It demands initiative and a true wish to work creatively with others—and often requires people to work in the evenings and at weekends.

Narrow specialization has always been discouraged and every student is still expected to reach a reasonably professional level in all departments.

We have always accepted candidates as potential film-makers—never as "Cameramen", "Directors", "Writers", "Editors", "Sound Recordists", etc.

Now, more than ever, the medium demands adaptable all-round film-makers, able to maintain a flexible and mobile attitude in times of change and innovation.

ANIMATION COURSE

This is a special one-year course provided by our Animation Department, which embraces a wide spectrum of techniques and encourages the development of original methods and individual styles. The course is available to successful graduates of the two-year Diploma Course at this School, to successful graduates from certain other professional film schools, and to people with experience in professional film-making. When a student wishes to make a professional career exclusively in animation and shows the required talent, the animation course may be taken after the first year of the Diploma Course.

CONSTITUTION

THE LONDON FILM SCHOOL, a 'Company Limited by guarantee' registered as a charity with the Department of Education and Science, is a non-profit-making organisation which was founded to provide intensive professional education in the art and technique of film-making. Heads of Departments, Course Directors, instructors and lecturers are themselves creative film-makers, technicians or critics and historians of the cinema. The school is a member of the Film Schools Association, the organisation which co-ordinates professional film education in this country, and of C.I.L.E.C.T.—which performs the same function internationally. General policy is laid down by a Board of Governors which also meets with student representatives at least three times each year.

QUALIFICATIONS

Several Governments grant loans (e.g. Canada) or scholarships (e.g. Switzerland) to successful applicants, and most British students receive grants from their Local Education Authorities. On the other hand, scholarships or grants previously awarded by any educational authority, government or Foundation do not necessarily guarantee acceptance by the school.

A basic knowledge of still photography is an essential—even for students who wish to become writers or directors. Any experience in music, theatre, video, sound recording, architecture, painting, sculpting, graphics, etc., is also valuable.

Although there is no official minimum age, no candidate is enrolled immediately upon completion of his secondary education. Candidates are invited to apply at this time for an interview, in order that their potentialities may be assessed. If considered suitable they will be given provisional acceptance for a later course.

For Overseas Residents

Applicants from abroad must be university graduates or must have had some experience in film-making. Students must be able to understand and communicate in English at an advanced level. All candidates will be asked to send samples of their work.

For Residents of the United Kingdom

Minimum educational requirements are a university degree, five passes at 'O' Level and two at 'A' Level G.C.E., or diplomas from art or technical schools; experience of film-making may be accepted in some cases.

Applicants will be asked to submit work and must in all cases attend for at least one interview at this school; they may also be interviewed by their local education authorities. Candidates are asked to inform the School of any approach they have made to Educational Authorities and to let us know the results.

DATES

A complete self-contained course starts three times a year. There are three terms in each year, each lasting 12 weeks. Courses commence as follows:

COURSE 66	30th September 1974
COURSE 67	6th January 1975
COURSE 68	28th April 1975
COURSE 69	29th September 1975
COURSE 70	12th January 1976

24 SHELTON STREET, LONDON, WC2H 9HP. Telephone: 01-240-0168

NFT

Programmes July—Sept.

Early and Rare

American films of the silent and early sound period from the Museum of Modern Art collection. (June 28—July 19)

Paramount 60th Anniversary

Part One of a mammoth (approx. 100 films) tribute to Paramount—from Thomas Ince to the present day. (Starts July 20)

Soviet Animation

A week of animated films from the USSR; features, shorts and children's films. (July 22—29)

Eroticism in the Cinema

Aspects of Censorship. An exploration of the erotic in films, from Theda Bara to Russ Meyer. (Starts August 4)

World at War

All 26 episodes of the Thames Television series compressed into 13 programmes. (July 29—August 3)

Steve Dwoskin and Twenty Four Frames

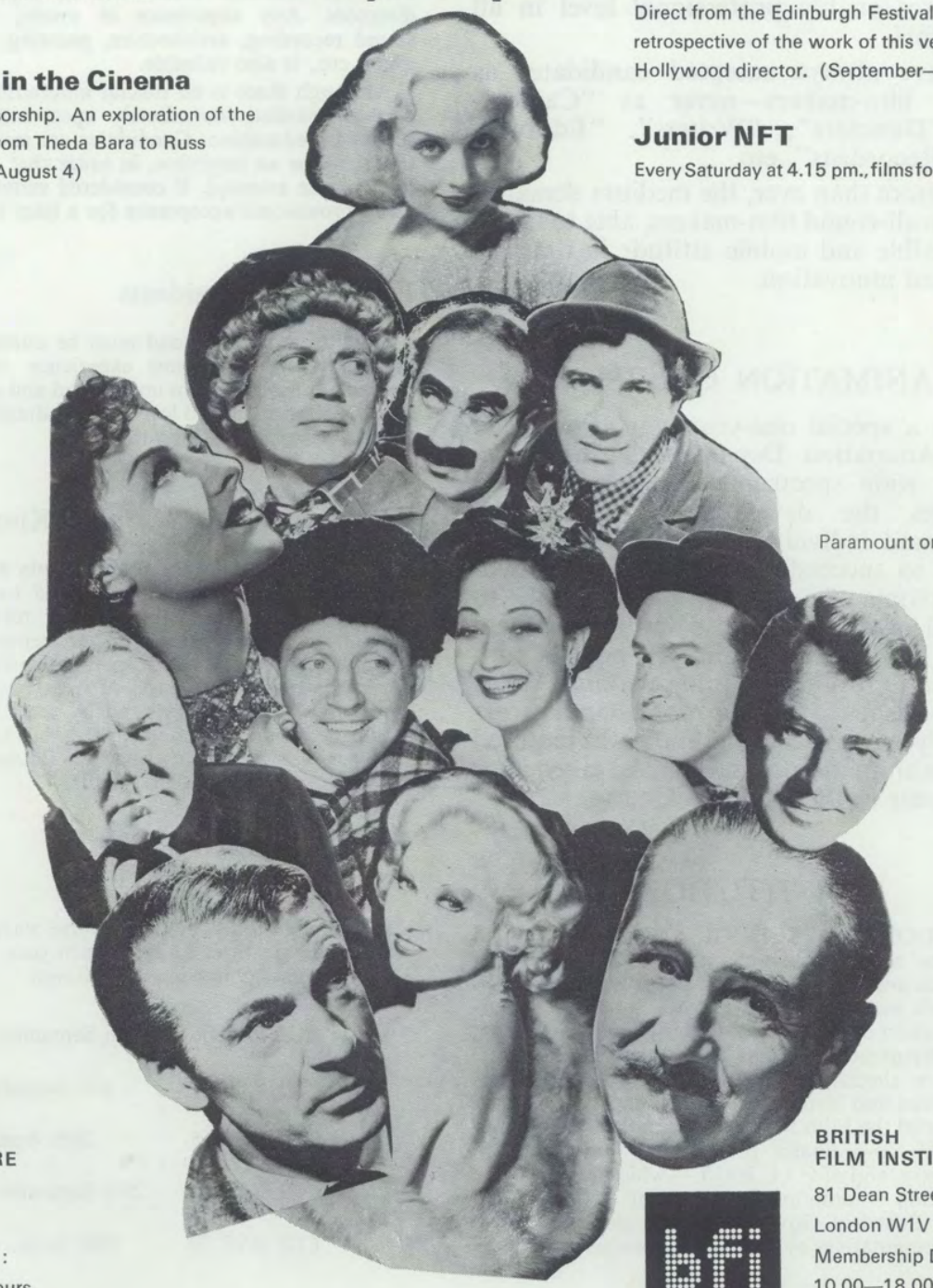
Independent films from Dwoskin (4 features and 3 shorts) and a selection from Twenty Four Frames.

Raoul Walsh

Direct from the Edinburgh Festival, a major retrospective of the work of this veteran Hollywood director. (September—October)

Junior NFT

Every Saturday at 4.15 pm., films for the family.



Paramount on Parade

NATIONAL FILM THEATRE

South Bank,
London SE1
Box Office open:
11.30—20.30 hours
Tel: 01 928 3232/3

BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE

81 Dean Street,
London W1V 6AA
Membership Dept open:
10.00—18.00 hours
Tel: 01 437 4355 ext. 42

bfi

Editor: Penelope Houston
Associate: David Wilson
Designer: John Harmer
Business Manager: John Smoker

SIGHT AND SOUND

SUMMER 1974

Volume 43 No. 3

INTERNATIONAL FILM QUARTERLY

Articles

Bresson's Lancelot du Lac Jonathan Rosenbaum 128
Stolen Privacy: Coppola's The Conversation David Denby 131
Getting in Close: an interview with Jack Gold Paul Madden, David Wilson 134
Threads through the Labyrinth: Hong Kong Movies Tony Rayns 138
Profession: Actor: an interview with Jack Nicholson John Russell Taylor 149
Swedish Retrospect John Gillett 152
Carl Dreyer and the Theme of Choice Dai Vaughan 156
TV Strategies and European Film Production Vincent Porter 163
Up to Date with Robert Aldrich Harry Ringel 166
Buñuel's Phantom of Liberty Axel Madsen 170
8½ as an Anatomy of Melancholy Timothy Hyman 172

Features

Cannes 74 Penelope Houston, Richard Roud 142
In the Picture 145
Sjöström and Stiller 154
Correspondence 185
Film Guide 188

Film Reviews

Lacombe Lucien Tom Milne 176
The Last Detail James Monaco 177
The Great Gatsby Penelope Houston 177
Sleeper Tony Rayns 178
Kid Blue Richard Combs 179
Dillinger Tom Milne 179
Blazing Saddles and **S*P*Y*S** Richard Combs 180
Bof! Victoria Radin 181

Book Reviews

Bergman on Bergman Jan Dawson 182
Alexander Dovzhenko: the poet as film-maker John Gillett 182
Adventures with D. W. Griffith David Robinson 183
Don't Look at the Camera Elizabeth Sussex 185

On the cover: Gene Hackman and Arthur Penn on location for 'The Dark Tower'

SIGHT AND SOUND is an independent critical magazine sponsored and published by the British Film Institute. It is not an organ for the expression of official British Film Institute policy: signed articles represent the views of their authors.

Copyright © 1974 by The British Film Institute. EDITORIAL, PUBLISHING AND ADVERTISING OFFICES: British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London, W1V 6AA. 01-437 4355. Telex: 27624. Entered as 2nd class matter at the Post Office, New York, N.Y. Printed in England. Published and distributed in the U.S.A. by SIGHT AND SOUND. All American subscriptions and advertising enquiries should be directed to Eastern News Distributors Inc., 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.

LANCELOT

Bresson's Lancelot du Lac

Jonathan Rosenbaum

Luc Simon as Lancelot

Lancelot du Lac embodies the perfection of a language that has been in the process of development and refinement for over thirty years. If it stuns and overwhelms one's sense of the possibilities of that language—in a way, perhaps, that no predecessor has done, at least since *Au Hasard Balthazar*—this is not because it represents a significant departure or deviation from the path Robert Bresson has consistently followed. The source of amazement lies in the film's clarity and simplicity, a precise and irreducible arrangement of sounds and images that is so wholly functional that nothing is permitted to detract from the overall narrative complex, and everything present is *used*. It is a film where the rattle of armour and the neighing of horses are as essential as the faces and bodies of the characters, where indeed each of these elements serves to isolate and define the importance and impact of the others.

The sheer rawness of what is there disconcerts, but it shouldn't lead one to focus unduly on what isn't there, or track down some elusive clue to the Bressonian mystery. To a certain extent, Bresson's films are *about* mystery, but their manner of arriving there is always quite concrete, just as the fictions of Kafka and Beckett are carefully constructed around certain principles of omission. Filling in these omissions is an act that every spectator/reader has to perform on some level, but anyone wishing to describe a Bresson film—as opposed to the experience of one—is obliged to leave these 'white spaces' intact rather than attempt to fill them in, for otherwise he runs the risk of merely taking his own pulse. The evidence, one can argue, is clearly intelligible to the eyes and ears, if only one can look and listen. For this reason, it seems useful to speak here of Bresson's art as one of immanence, not one of transcendence, and one where the inside is always revealed by remaining on the outside. 'There is a nice quote from Leonardo da Vinci,' Bresson has remarked, 'which goes something like this: "Think about the surface of the work. Above all think about the surface." '

Another relevant quote: 'Le cinéma n'est pas un spectacle, c'est une écriture.' Following a Bressonian law of contrast, it is only with the most 'spectacular' of his subjects that the implications of this distinction become most cogently demonstrated. Apparently Bresson first made this statement at a Cannes press conference in 1957, shortly after *Un Condamné à mort s'est Echappé* was shown; even then, *Lancelot* was already something more than just a twinkle in his eye. It is a project he has nurtured over twenty years—periodically announced as his next film, and periodically postponed because of the problems of financing it.

One indication of the sustaining power of his dream—a blend of chance and predestination oddly echoing the metaphysics of his fictional world—can be seen in his selection of Laura Duke Condominas to play Guenièvre, a decision initially reached when he came across a photograph of her, with no prior information about who she was. It was only afterwards that he discovered she was the daughter of Niki de St. Phalle, co-director (with Peter Whitehead) of the recent film *Daddy*—and his original choice for Guenièvre some two decades ago.

The shooting, which lasted nearly four months, took place in the Vendée region (including the Ile de Noirmoutier) last summer; the sound-mixing alone took three and a half weeks. To my knowledge, there are only two facets of Bresson's dream that remain unrealised. He was unable to shoot the film in separate English and French versions, a desire he spoke of in an interview with Godard eight years ago. (As I write, an English-dubbed version is being prepared.) And as a concession to the producer, he has agreed to call the film *Lancelot du Lac* rather than *Le Graal*, the title given to his shooting script.

In all his previous films since *Les Dames du Bois de Boulogne*, Bresson's procedure has been either to work closely with a preexisting text (Bernanos' in *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne* and *Mouchette*, Dostoevsky's in *Une Femme Douce* and *Quatre Nuits d'un Rêveur*, André Devigny's in *Un Condamné à mort*, historical records in *Procès de Jeanne d'Arc*) or to invent completely original narratives (*Pickpocket* and *Balthazar*). In *Lancelot*, he has used the background and characters of Arthurian legend as the basis for an original story, systematically eliminating all the fantastic elements. The magic of Merlin and the Lady of the Lake are totally absent, and all we see of the Grail is an image that appears behind an early title which sketches the story's background—an emblem that briefly recalls the cross appearing at the end of *Le Journal d'un Curé de Campagne*.

The remainder of the legend has been tailored to suit Bresson's purposes. As in the final section of the 13th century *Vulgate Cycle*,* the central focus is on the adulterous affair between Lancelot and Guenièvre, seen within the wider context of the unsuccessful Grail quest (virtually over before the film begins) and the dissolution of Artus' kingdom. Many of the same incidents are included: Mordred's plot to expose the adultery to the king, Lancelot's appearance at a jousting tournament in disguise, his recovery from his jousting wound in Escalot, his subsequent rescue of Guenièvre and, after the siege of the castle of the Joyeuse Garde, his decision to return her to Artus. On the other hand, it appears that all of Bresson's characters are considerably younger (although the girl who falls in love with Lancelot in Escalot is more or less 'replaced' by an old peasant woman who shelters and cares for him); Lancelot dies not in a hermitage but on a battlefield; and an enormous amount of the plot is simply stripped away.

For that matter, according to Michel Estève,† neither the tents nor the Round Table nor the chess game nor the wooden tub in which Guenièvre bathes belongs to the period, all of them constituting conscious anachronisms on Bresson's part. This is a distinctly modern *Lancelot*, in striking contrast to the relatively 'medieval' atmosphere of Bresson's last two films, both set in contemporary Paris, where the gentle creature often suggested a lonely maiden in a tower waiting to be rescued, and the dreamer resembled a wandering knight in search of a pure love that was equally hopeless. The sense of elongated durations and passing seasons that we associate with the romances of Chrétien de Troyes is more evident in *Balthazar*, or even in John Ford's *The Searchers*, than in the tightly compressed episodes of *Lancelot*, where action and event is all.

The comparison with Ford is hardly gratuitous: *Lancelot* is surely the closest thing we can ever hope to get to a Bressonian Western or adventure film, although it also achieves a tapestry-like stillness in certain scenes that plays against the livelier movements. The use of simply repeated motifs—like Guenièvre's lighted window, the sound of a crow punctuating her brief moments with Lancelot in a hayloft, or separate shots of a riderless horse and a bird in the closing sequences—recall the methods of a 20th century 'medieval' poem like e. e. cummings' 'All in green went my love riding', where certain words (red, deer) are reiterated to create an overall tableau effect, as in the following lines:

Four lean hounds crouched low and smiling
the merry deer ran before.

Fleeter be they than dappled dreams
the swift sweet deer
the red rare deer.

Four red roebuck at a white water
the cruel bugle sang before.

Most modern of all, perhaps, are the characters of Guenièvre and Lancelot, although the specific signs of their modernity

*Available in English translation as *The Death of King Arthur*, translated by James Cable, Penguin Books, 1971.

†*Robert Bresson*, revised edition, Seghers, 1974.

are not at all easy to pinpoint. The scenes between them seem to adhere rather closely to the courtly tradition, and the spiritual malaise affecting Lancelot—torn between his love for Guenièvre, his vow to God to end their adultery, and his loyalty to Artus—contains no discernible elements that are added to the legend. And yet the absence of any psychology, the elliptical exposition of their feelings, and the degree to which Bresson isolates them from their environments and defines them in relation to each other, all serve to give them unmistakable contemporary reverberations. And the anonymous scenes of war and carnage that enclose their story register with an effect which is even more timely, exposing a dark terrain where blood is being spilled today.

(1) In a dark forest, two broadswords meet and clash. The camera pans back and forth, following the clanking movements of the unidentifiable armoured figures as they continue to fight. One sword is raised, and in one fell swoop the other figure is decapitated. A stream of blood rushes from the stump, spilling on the ground.

(2) In a dark forest, an unidentified armoured knight and his horse are wounded. Close-up: an arrow has pierced the horse's skull over one eye. Cut to a bright shot of a dark bird diving in an empty white sky. The knight slowly rises to his feet, sword in hand, and leans against a tree. Cut to a riderless horse galloping through the forest. The knight utters a single word, 'Guenièvre': we recognise the voice as Lancelot's. He drops his sword and collapses with a heavy rattle on a pile of armoured bodies. Cut to another shot of the bird in the sky. Lancelot's head drops with a metallic shudder and his body becomes still.

The appalling violence that opens and closes *Lancelot* presents us with war as anonymous and indifferent slaughter, with faceless phantoms in the darkness battling and perishing beneath heavy armour that instantly turns into scrap metal as soon as the bodies become mute. The gush of blood from the decapitated knight and the last word of Lancelot are the only concrete signs that we are witnessing men and not machines, death and not an abstraction of death.

Bresson has always been unusually lucid about his working methods. In various statements over the years, he has repeatedly outlined the following strategies: (1) Use individuals without any previous acting experience and instruct them to recite their lines as tonelessly as possible, without expression. (2) Shoot always in natural locations. (3) Replace an image with a sound whenever possible. (4) Structure visual 'syntax' not around single images, but around the relationships between images—a process partially arrived at by favouring images that are relatively flat and non-expressive, neutral and uniform.* (5) More generally, pare away everything that is 'unnecessary', i.e. inorganic.

*'The flatter an image is, the less it expresses, the more easily it is transformed in contact with other images.' 'It is necessary for the images to have something in common, to participate in a kind of union.'

The rigour of Bresson's economy is beautifully apparent in the first lines of dialogue that we hear in the film, spoken by the old woman of Escalot as she binds together bundles of sticks with the help of a little girl: 'He whose footsteps one hears before seeing him will die within the year.' 'Even if it's his horse's footsteps?' asks the girl. 'Even if it's his horse's footsteps.'

In this brief exchange, we are introduced to the idea of predestination, thematically as well as concretely; the last words are immediately followed by the sound of a knight approaching on his horse, whom we subsequently see. We are also presented with the notion of sound preceding image—which becomes the central editing principle of the tournament sequence, and is much in use elsewhere. Finally, there is a forecast of the explicit ways in which the destinies of the horses are bound to those of the men who ride them: Lancelot's return to Camaalot is intercut with shots of his horse responding to his fellow creatures in a nearby stall (evoking Balthazar's encounter with the circus animals); the death of Lancelot's horse in the final sequence immediately precedes his own; and throughout the film, much of the dialogue is punctuated by the sounds of horses, so that their presence or proximity is frequently felt even when they aren't seen.

Bresson's manner of infusing naturalistic detail with formal significance is particularly masterful in the marvellous use he makes of armour; in his hands, it serves as practical extensions of all but the second of the working strategies cited above. It functions as an additional layer of non-expressiveness, increasing neutrality and uniformity in separate images and cloaking identities in many crucial scenes—the tournament as well as the forest battles. (Indeed, apart from the old woman and little girl, no positive identification of any of the characters becomes possible until Lancelot arrives in Camaalot, and lifts his visor to greet Gauvain.) When Gauvain is defending Lancelot to Artus against Mordred's charges while the three are on horseback, each line of dialogue is preceded by the character lifting his visor to speak: again, a naturalistic detail, but one that heightens the anti-theatrical basis of Bresson's style precisely by *playing* on a 'theatrical' device—each lifted visor serving as the equivalent of a raised curtain, which reveals only another blank surface.

The concentration on hands and feet that is a constant in Bresson's work becomes all the more affecting here when it is set against the shiny surfaces of metal in other shots. Or consider the overall effect of contrast achieved between the suits of armour and the image of Guenièvre standing in her bath, which makes flesh seem at once more rarified and vulnerable, more soft and graceful, more palpable and precious. The on and off-screen rattle of the armour throughout the film reinforces this impression, at the same time that it isolates the more lifelike sounds coming from horses and men, and emphasises their (minimal) expressiveness—thus investing Lancelot's last word with a sensual impact it wouldn't otherwise have.

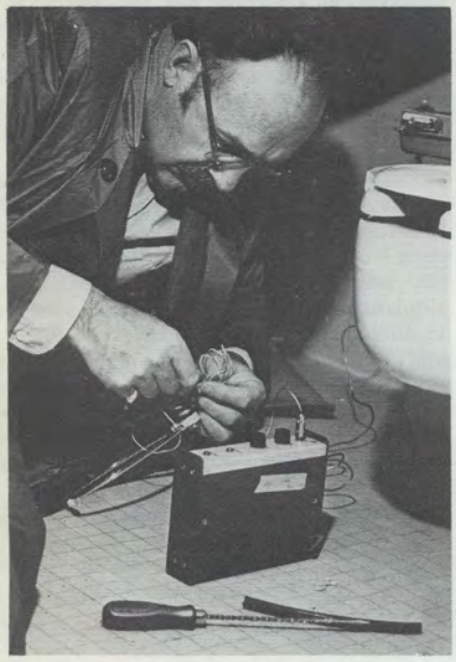
Bresson has described himself both as a painter and as a *metteur-en-ordre*. Combining these notions, he establishes and mixes his sounds like colours on a palette and then places them 'in order', establishing relationships that are purely aural as well as visual-aural. The spare use of drum and bagpipe, the armour, horses' footsteps, sounds of blood and water (including a rainstorm, glimpsed in one extraordinary fixed shot), a door rattling, birds calling, flags waving in the wind, a flurry of arrows whizzing through the air, and the crack of lances hitting shields, are only a few of the essential ingredients. It is said that while working on the soundtrack, Bresson wanted to include at one point the sound of a horse chewing on his bit; having no recorded examples that were satisfactory, he wound up manufacturing the noise with his own teeth. It is a story that irresistibly brings to mind the methods of Tati—perhaps the only contemporary of Bresson who composes and organises his soundtracks on a comparable level.

The extreme darkness of many of the forest scenes—in itself a source of great beauty—often helps to accentuate the function of sounds in guiding our attention, but the frequent expositional use of sound in brighter locations is equally striking. In the cottage of the old woman of Escalot, we first discover the presence of a fire burning in the hearth through the sound of its crackle. And in the astonishing tournament sequence, sound becomes the primary narrative force: the crowd is heard but remains virtually unseen, and we hear the collision of lances with armour in the first two encounters before we are permitted to see the outcomes.

Many critics have spoken of Bresson's style as one that ideally eliminates the possibility of suspense—usually citing the title of *Un Condamné à mort s'est Echappé*, which gives away the outcome of the plot, as crucial evidence. But as Hitchcock reminds us in his interview book with Truffaut, knowing the outcome of an event can often *intensify* suspense, and surely *Un Condamné à mort* frequently plays on our expectations to generate tension, even if the form of this tension is severely disciplined. And in the jousting tournament of *Lancelot*, whether we know (through some acquaintance with the legend) the outcomes or not, we are being 'directed' as rigorously as in any Hitchcock showpiece: there are few other action sequences in all cinema that create as much anticipation and excitement.

Finally, of course, there are the voices—neutral and uniform in their apparent lack of expressiveness, but presences charged with meaning and effect in relation to the overall complex of sound and silence, where the lack of overt emotion becomes a sounding brass against which the words themselves are able to resound. 'Tu es vivant, et tu es là,' says Guenièvre to Lancelot, back from the Grail quest. 'Rien, plus jamais, ne t'écartera de moi!' In the system of meanings established by Bresson, presence defines absence, life ('Tu es vivant') defines death ('Guenièvre!'), a dark earth defines a bright sky, and love defines the renunciation of love—armour and flesh, sound and image, Lancelot and Guenièvre composing one another through diverse channels to form an indissoluble surface that speaks. ■

STOLEN PRIVACY
COPPOLA'S THE CONVERSATION



Faces of a professional spy. Gene Hackman as Harry Caul, the lonely eavesdropper in Francis Ford Coppola's 'The Conversation'

David Denby

When Francis Ford Coppola insisted that he made *The Godfather* for the freedom big money would bring him to work on his own personal projects, many people jeered at what they took to be the guilty old Hollywood bull, the promise so often made, so often not delivered. Well, Coppola has delivered and the cynics stand mute. *The Conversation* is remarkably ambitious and serious—a Hitchcockian thriller, a first-rate psychological portrait of a distinctive modern villain (a professional eavesdropper) and a bitter attack on American business values, all in one movie. I feel that Coppola has partially botched the thriller, but the film is a triumph none the less—gritty, complex, idiosyncratic, a rare case of freedom used rather than squandered.

People have also said that Coppola is congenitally lucky. *The Godfather's* release coincided with a grisly Mafia carnival in New York (bodies stuffed into auto trunks or thrown into rivers—that sort of thing), and now *The Conversation*, which is about a man rather like Watergate bugger James McCord, profits from the great American national uproar over privacy and illegal surveillance. But Coppola claims that he began writing the screenplay for *The Conversation* in 1966, years before such things became national issues, so let us call his timeliness prescient rather than lucky. Timeliness isn't necessarily a sign of triviality in an artist; it may be a sign of good instinct, an ability to connect personal concern with national obsession. I think Coppola may become this sort of non-exploitative 'public' artist, a kind of cinematic Dickens (all proportions kept).

There's no doubt that he develops his protagonist, Harry Caul (Gene Hackman), with a Dickensian richness of eccentricity, an extension of spiritual condition into physical metaphor. The conception is audacious and aggressively paradoxical. Harry is a wiretapper, an eavesdropper, a man who listens through walls and across open spaces—in all, 'the best bugger on the West Coast.' He steals privacy for a living. At the same time he is obsessed with his own privacy, or what he takes to be privacy. We soon realise that Harry suffers from an extreme desolation of the spirit, a nearly pathological loneliness and guilt; his insistence on 'privacy' is just a way of keeping people at a distance. Repressed, awkward, terrified of his own powers and feelings, he cannot bear the demands people make on him, *any* demands. Yet he is immensely skilled, and the machines provide a refuge. At work in his fenced-off, prison-like corner of an immense warehouse loft, he thrusts the tape-recorder between himself and experience, and he feels in control.

The man who knows that any secret can be stolen protects his own 'secrets' by the simple expedient of living as little as possible. He pretends that he doesn't have a telephone (keeping it in a drawer) so people can't reach him, and in the modern world, that is a way of denying that one exists.

Even the connection with *things* is kept to a minimum; possessions may also be a drain on 'privacy' ('I care about my *keys*,' he tells a friendly landlady who worries about his furniture in case of fire and has had the temerity to duplicate his keys). Coppola's paradox grows in power and wit as its logic becomes clear. Poor Harry is so fearful, so given over to obsession, that he begins spying on himself. Before entering his mistress's door he hides outside, 'casing' the apartment; since it's clear that she has not been unfaithful, who is he casing but himself, a man caught red-handed in the act of visiting his mistress? When the rumpled, affectionate woman grows restive, he agrees to end the connection, but still there's no possible safety; *Harry* knows about Harry, and that's dangerous enough. (In a dream that expresses both fear and longing, Harry tells his secrets, but never in life.)

His agonised diffidence, which invariably is misunderstood and gives pain, results from a self-loathing so extreme that no one can relieve it. Such a condition of spirit cannot be 'explained', and Coppola really doesn't try. It's enough to embody it. Gene Hackman, who has been physically imposing in some of his recent commercial pictures, here alters his carriage and stance, and his burly strength seems undistinguished, graceless, mere irrelevant weight. Repressed characters can be a trap for actors; they tend to overdo the fumbling mannerisms and show us too much acting, as if to distance themselves personally from the men they are playing. But Hackman, who has always demonstrated a rare talent for 'ordinary' men and non-actorish readings, here conveys a human being all locked up inside without nagging us with small points—the performance is *clean*.

Harry has blood on his hands, and as a congenitally guilty Catholic, it's killing him. We know that in the past his eavesdropping has led to three murders. Therefore when a mysterious corporate magnate (Robert Duvall) hires him to spy on his faithless young wife (Cindy Williams) and her lover (Frederic Forrest), Harry hesitates before turning in a tape of the lovers' conversation. On tape the two have made an assignation at a hotel. If the husband should take vengeance, wouldn't Harry be responsible? When a treacherous prostitute steals the tapes and turns them over to the husband, he is forced to confront his nightmare. In a scene of nearly unbearable moral tension, Harry's terror of involvement does epic battle against his agonising fear for the young couple, but he cannot resolve the crisis; with the screams for help literally coming through the wall, he falls down in a swoon. Coppola stays with Harry throughout this scene, and it's only later that we find out what happened. Someone gets killed, but in the emotional and moral terms of the movie the catastrophe is Harry's; he suffers a spiritual and moral death from which there is no possible resurrection.

There only remains the final working out of his fate, which is intricately and ironically just. Against his will, Harry has become part of a murder plot; when he discovers that his own apartment has been bugged by the plotters, he rips it to pieces, tearing up the walls, the floor, the furniture in a fruitless search for the microphone. The insane logic of Harry's obsession has thus been fulfilled: the bugger gets bugged, the man with only his privacy to protect destroys his possessions and winds up guarding literally nothing—an empty space, a cavity sealed with locks. The American mania for 'home security' here reaches its comic apotheosis. Our last view of Harry is very sad: he sits alone in the wreckage playing a saxophone along with a jazz record—halfway into life, halfway out. We're left with little doubt that the stasis is permanent.

Privacy, as we know, is a modern middle-class notion, a product of relative economic well-being and city living and respect for individual selves. Yet the same modern society which creates the demand for privacy also creates the technology which makes its elimination a fairly simple matter. Privacy can be bought, sold, or stolen, like any possession or commodity. Indeed, Harry Caul would like to operate as efficiently and impersonally as any other professional. He would like to think of his victims as anonymous 'targets', to lose himself in the delightful technical intricacies of robbing them without regard for what he is stealing or what they might feel about it.

The movie is an angry, funny attack on this sort of thinking, which Coppola sees as a natural product of American business values and our eternal boyish enthusiasm for technology as an end in itself. Stealing privacy has become part of the American way of life, and to make the point clear Coppola sends Harry to a San Francisco convention of security experts and equipment manufacturers, at which evil, destructive but undeniably ingenious little spying gadgets are hawked and sold like kitchen appliances or motorboats. To the business-men-spies, it's just an ordinary convention, a professional meeting place; to us the ordinariness of such an event is perhaps the most peculiar thing about it. In *The Godfather*, also, the most extreme and fantastic behaviour was shown to emerge from a setting of normality—family life. Coppola seems to relish the more bizarre American contradictions, the clash between context and substance, between the style of an act (banal) and its meaning (horrifying).

Although he is drawn to extreme behaviour, Coppola's style of representation remains straightforwardly realistic. That's why his films may not at first appear to be the work of an artist. His attitudes and personality emerge not so much from the camera style as from the behaviour on screen. For instance, he has a genius for shallow, noisy, self-propelling types—the American as untrammelled egotist, powerful and infantile at the same time. He appears to love their theatrical energy and flash, and his sense of how such people reveal themselves in social situations is so accurate that he can do very funny, outrageous scenes without a trace of caricature. (Much of *The Godfather*, of course, was extremely funny.)

In *The Conversation*, Coppola has a savagely good time with Harry's surveillance colleagues. Boastful, frenetic, absurdly aggressive, these American go-getters can't stop competing for a moment, not even at a party, and so they begin showing off and playing dirty tricks on one another. Their viciousness while 'relaxing', more revealing than any amount of overt skulduggery, suggests that they are successful precisely because they don't give a damn who they hurt or how much. The code of 'professionalism' provides an apparent morality, a blinding justification for any act; they have no idea, not even a suspicion, that they are evil men. The surveillance experts are hideously funny and also tragic; looking at them it's hard for an American not to think of soldiers testing weapons in Vietnam and other examples of professionals run amuck. By immersing himself in a particular, idiosyncratic corner, accurately perceived, Coppola has made contact with a major strain in American life, a malaise that persists through generations. His unresolved love-hate relationship with the characters makes the bitterness of his criticism acceptable; if he entirely hated them, the film would have collapsed into diatribe, and we would have rejected his attitudes out of hand.

In a long, fascinating sequence, Harry reconstructs on tape the lovers' conversation as they walk slowly around a crowded San Francisco square. Some of the meandering talk has been recorded close-up by one of Harry's bugs, some of it from hundreds of yards away by long-distance microphones. As Harry mixes the separate tracks together, perfecting the aural image, we actually see the conversation; and it occurs to us that Harry is reconstructing and perfecting life—or at least a simulacrum of it. Of course film-making is also a reconstruction of life, and it's tempting to view *The Conversation's* attack on irresponsible professionalism as also an implied attack on certain kinds of irresponsible film-making—empty, technically perfect work in which beautiful images are the director's only achievement; art without feeling or bite. Coppola's own sense of responsibility, I would say, requires him to give each of his characters as much dramatic and personal stature as he can muster. *The Godfather* was so pleasing, in part, because Coppola seemed to envelop all the characters in the warmth of his own appreciation. Everyone was 'on', and so we rejoiced in their entrances and bloody exits as if they were guests at a particularly brilliant and hilarious party. Most of *The Conversation* is sombre, even melancholy, in tone, but the principle of responsibility remains the same.

Did Coppola intend *The Conversation* as a critical commentary on *Blow-Up*, a way of showing how that kind of story could be done? (He started work on the screenplay the year *Blow-Up* was completed.) The similarity is suggestive; both films centre on technological voyeurism and irresponsibility, and Harry's work with the tape parallels the famous sequence in which the fashion photographer discovers a murder by repeatedly cropping and blowing up a photograph. At the very least, I feel I can say that the emotional thrust of *The Conversation* reminds me of what was wrong with *Blow-Up*. Now, more than ever, the inhuman chic of Antonioni's manner seems to invalidate his attack on non-involvement. Except for semi-prurient curiosity and vague disgust, Antonioni's own attitudes

remained obscure and hidden; and so his people, stranded in an arbitrarily arranged and decorated vacuum, became mere inert portents of disconnection and alienation. They felt no pain, and neither did anyone watching *Blow-Up*. Since everybody in the film was dead, and reality was elusive and unknowable anyway, the photographer's criminal indifference never registered as an emotional fact.

Coppola has rescued the story from 'art'. He places his alienated man in a recognisable American business/social world, and the details and mood seem intuitively right, making emotional contact in a way that Antonioni's awkward, vaguely metaphorical use of swinging London commonplaces did not. Moreover, Coppola is far too *interested* in Harry to allow this sad technological wizard to become an example of modern man's inability to feel or communicate or any rot like that. Contradictory, stubbornly eccentric, intensively imagined as a particular kind of human futility, Harry could never inspire any such banal interpretation. As Gene Hackman plays him, he is anything but emotionally dead (that cliché of 'advanced' film-making)—he's inarticulate because he feels too much and too incoherently, immobile because every possible road of conduct becomes an imagined disaster. Participating in life is an agony for such a man; therefore whether he acts or fails to act, we are drawn to him emotionally.

I have tried to emphasise the solid benefits Coppola has derived from a relative aesthetic conservatism; yet I fear that because *The Conversation* holds to a framework of realism and is concerned with something so old-fashioned as spiritual anguish it will be dismissed as 'humanistic' in some quarters.

The Conversation is one of those movies (the classic example is *Rear Window*) which are told almost entirely from the restricted viewpoint of a single character, deriving their power and excitement from this apparent limitation. Of course Harry isn't immobilised in a single room like James Stewart's photographer; his immobilisation is spiritual and moral. Nevertheless, as there are only four major settings in *The Conversation*, feelings of claustrophobia and paranoia become a psychological factor in our response to Coppola's movie, too. The viewer chafes and frets as each man is drawn into a mystery by fragments—a clue here, a portent there. For the viewer, as for the central characters, the experience is one of reluctant passage from ignorance to knowledge, from a frightened surmise to a horrifying certainty.

These restricted viewpoint strategies direct our responses more coercively than 'open' constructions. The opening shot of *The Conversation*, which should become famous, closes off the big world, delivers us over to that segment that Coppola wants to explore; it's a continuous zoom which starts at an immense distance above Union Square and slowly moves closer, discarding irrelevancies and distractions from our view, until we finally discover Harry in the crowd, eavesdropping on the young couple. From thereafter we see nothing that Harry doesn't see or fantasise himself. Normally we like the characters we are forced to identify with; Coppola makes a more ambivalent and troublesome demand on us. We don't like Harry very much, but Coppola's narrative method holds us in tension, frustrating our moral bloodlust, our desire to see Harry destroyed; he's contemptible, pathetic, yet we are baffled and dismayed by the same things as he. The climax of *The Conversation*, when the murdered man's blood wells up out of the toilet and spills at Harry's feet, strikes us as a hideous moment of self-knowledge for Harry, the truth behind a lifetime of denial and evasion. It is one of the most grimly satisfying scenes in recent movies, a true horror epiphany. And at that moment our feelings are finally resolved into outright sympathy: Harry has been punished enough.

Unfortunately, after all the suspense build-up, the repeated playing of the tape, etc., Coppola never satisfies our curiosity about the mystery itself. Limited to what Harry knows, we never quite understand what is going on, and some of this confusion could have been avoided with a little extra exposition. For instance, I assume that Cindy Williams is Robert Duvall's young wife, although for all we know she could be his daughter; it's hard to understand how the prostitute who steals the tape knew she was going to be invited to Harry's workshop, and so on. Murder mysteries are often full of such loopholes, but we generally don't notice them—the pacing is too fast. *The Conversation's* slow, repetitive, accumulative method forces us to review what we know, like a detective building a case, and the narrative sloppiness becomes irritating. Worst of all, the surprise denouement, in which the victims and murderers get reversed and Harry realises that he has been used even more viciously than he had thought, occurs so quickly and casually that we can hardly take it in. I sympathise with Coppola's dilemma. A confrontation between Harry and the young couple might have straightened things out easily enough, but by presenting Harry with an actual physical threat (as Hitchcock did to his voyeur in *Rear Window*) Coppola would have turned *The Conversation* into a more conventional melodrama. He sticks to the internal and psychological threat, thereby losing a part of his audience at the end—an honourable failure.

Some other details are not so honourable. The whole 'sinister' atmosphere of the corporate office, with its shadowy Mr. Big and his ominous, cryptic young assistant, comes very close to the style of a TV movie. It's hard to say whether Coppola's imagination simply faltered or whether he felt a little TV trashiness was needed to get the film financed and widely attended. Like *Klute* a few years ago, *The Conversation* hangs a first-rate characterisation and an accurately perceived social milieu on to an implausible, badly resolved thriller plot. Still, Coppola is a most stirring example of a man purified by success. I have the feeling that after earning another $7 million or so on *Godfather II* he'll make some movies even more difficult and uncompromising than *The Conversation*, and among them will be a work of art satisfying in all its details. ■

'The Conversation': surveillance expert and quarry. Michael Higgins, Cindy Williams, Frederic Forrest

GETTING IN CLOSE

AN INTERVIEW WITH JACK GOLD

Paul Madden and David Wilson

Top: Mark Russel, Nicol Williamson in 'The Gangster Show'; centre: Trevor Howard, Cyril Cusack in 'Catholics'; bottom: Nicol Williamson in 'The Reckoning'

Jack Gold has directed four features—*The Bofors Gun*, *The Reckoning*, *The National Health* and the still to be seen *Who?*—but his larger reputation rests on his work for television. He began as a film editor with the BBC, and graduated to directing short film stories, usually fronted by a reporter, for the long-running news magazine programme *Tonight*. From *Tonight* he went on to make full-length documentaries, the best remembered of which is probably *Death in the Morning* (1964), his *tour de force* about fox-hunting, with Alan Whicker. In 1967 he turned to drama with *The Lump*, about one man's fight against the notorious lump system in the building industry. There followed a series of widely acclaimed filmed TV plays: *The World of Coppard* (1967), an adaptation of three A. E. Coppard short stories; *Faith and Henry* (1969), about the adolescent friendship between a coloured girl and a white boy; two plays by Tom Clarke, *Mad Jack* (1970) about Siegfried Sassoon, and *Stocker's Copper* (1972) about a Cornish miners' strike in 1913; and *The Gangster Show* (1972), a pastiche version of Brecht's *The Resistible Rise of Arturo Ui*. His most recent work was *Catholics*, which was shown in Britain on Easter Sunday this year.

Catholics, Brian Moore's novella, coolly lays bare the conflict between traditional and modern versions of Catholic belief—unduly cerebral, perhaps even for television feature treatment, though with a recognisably humanist quality to which Jack Gold would be likely to respond.

Moore's adaptation adheres faithfully to the spirit of his original, though understandably he (and Gold) has expanded half-hints in order to clarify the central clash between old dogma and new fashion. It is the end of the century. The Church has entirely discarded the Latin Mass and its associated doctrine of transubstantiation; the rapprochement of Christian and Buddhist faiths looms ahead. But the new style is threatened by events on a remote Irish island. The monks of Mork Abbey, led by their obstinate abbot, have continued to conduct the forbidden Mass, attracting planeloads of international pilgrims—and television coverage. In flashback, in a Vatican moving ostentatiously with the times, a blandly benevolent Father General (Raf Vallone) reads from a xeroxed facts sheet as he briefs a young American priest as troubleshooter.

Father Kinsella (Martin Sheen) is one of the new breed, more interested in social justice (priests are now leading revolutions in Latin America) than in God, as the Irish abbot later observes, and in his black poloneck sweater and green denim jacket looking less like a priest than an explosives expert—an impression neatly underlined when the boatman who has come to ferry him to the island refuses to take him because he's obviously not 'the Father' they were expecting. The film has opened with a celebration of the old-style Mass (a scene not in Moore's original). The worshippers have gathered on a cliff-top, and the camera looks at their bobbing heads in long shot, gradually moving in to individual, expectant faces—a visual contrast with the cold, brooding isolation of Kinsella, who overlooks the crowd from a distance, curious but unmoved. The battle-lines are drawn for the inevitable clash between abbot and envoy. Or are they? A lesser director might easily have enlivened the plot (which is basically a series of set conversation pieces) with that spurious device beloved of flagging TV series, the dramatic confrontation. But the first glimpse of the abbot (Trevor Howard), gazing wearily out from the sanctuary of the monastery as a helicopter lands with Kinsella aboard, and his understated remark to a monk ('We have a visitor'), presages the more restrained and authentic approach which Jack Gold has adopted, and which he has obviously encouraged in his actors.

Trevor Howard's performance throughout is quietly impressive, his weather-beaten face registering sadness, humour, anger and doubt—sometimes all at once—as he spars with his clean-cut opponent. 'It would not do to trip Rome up,' he jokes as the Vatican visitor negotiates a tricky step. Anger flares briefly when they discuss Lourdes (the abbot has been there and found it wanting) and the reasons for the continuing popularity of the Mass ('There are no miracles here'); but the abbot has the measure of this intruder, and is well practised in manoeuvre. Kinsella cannot avoid encountering the leading lights among the monks, and Gold sharply individualises their characters (merely sketched in the book), a tactic he exploits to calculated dramatic effect in the closing sequences.

One is aware in retrospect of how every shot in this adroitly paced film has been made to count, dovetailing into the final clash of wills. The book's ending is anti-climactic, since the abbot's loss of faith is indirectly revealed earlier. The film saves the ironic revelation until the abbot is

escorting Kinsella to the helicopter which will return him to the mainland. The monks converge on the two figures. 'We'll not change,' shouts one of them as the helicopter ascends, leaving the abbot, who has acceded to Rome after failing in his bid to resign, isolated in the foreground. Stumbling, he leads his unruly flock into the chapel to pray ('Prayer is the only miracle'), exhausting his last resource in order to win them over. The camera closes in on Trevor Howard's agonised face as he stutters 'Our Father', knowing there is no one there. The faces of the monks, in whose eyes there brightens again the ecstasy of unshakeable faith, are briefly intercut; and the camera freezes on a lingering close-up of faith destroyed.

PM

How was *Catholics* set up?

The American producer Sidney Glazier, who made *The Producers*, knew Brian Moore and had a proof copy of the novel. He tried for some time to set up a production, and he finally got CBS Television to put up some money. Harlech Television also put some money into it. Sidney Glazier's British partner, Barry Levinson, who produced *The Amazing Mr Blunden*, sent me the script, which I liked, and that was it. Brian Moore wrote a script from his book, and he was in Ireland while we were shooting. I'm a great believer in working from the script if it's right—I don't mess around with it—and the script was excellent. We felt there was another short scene required, and Brian wrote it in Ireland. We had a complete feature crew, with Gerry Fisher as cameraman, and we shot the film entirely in Ireland—except for the Raf Vallone scene, which we shot in Bristol. It took 18 or 19 days, with about four different locations across Ireland. The budget was about $250,000, which is quite expensive for a television film. Technically it was very proficient. But I was unhappy with the print. We had a beautiful print, but Harlech thought it was too dark, so they transferred it to video and transmitted the video. So you didn't get the full benefit of the camerawork, which was marvellous.

The film follows the novel very closely.

Yes, but it's not as stylish as the novel. The novel is very interesting stylistically, and the film is really a straightforward narrative adaptation—though I think it reflects the novel very well in film terms. It was a very good script for actors. Each of the main characters has a good scene, has his moment, and they were also filtering through the rest of the piece.

Some critics suggested that the futurist element was rather vague. After the opening sequence it was only really referred to in the dialogue.

I think that's possibly true. It's much clearer in the book, and of course in the book you have time to refer back, to remind yourself that this is set in the future. There were only two opportunities for doing this in the film. Textually, so that the things they are talking about make you realise that this is the future, and then with the scene in Rome, the flashback. In a way I think this was done too quickly. We tried to convey the future with the Father General's wardrobe—his white polo-neck sweater, his gloves, his casual jacket and so on—and with the mixture of very old and very modern furniture. Then there was his language, using the word 'kosher' and so on. But that was the only possibility in terms of setting. There was also the subtitle at the beginning. It was originally called simply 'A Fable', but Harlech obviously had a fright and they added 'for the future'.

We tried to suggest the future in the Vatican scene, just giving little hints without actually underlining it, but I don't think we succeeded with the mechanics of it. I don't know how that affects one's understanding and appreciation of the film, but I think it was important to know that it is set in the future. Because otherwise it doesn't make sense. If you have assumed it's set in 1974 and then you hear that private confessions have been abolished... So I think you had actually to say, 'This is set in the future.' I don't like audiences being confused in films...

You generally follow your original source fairly closely.

I think of myself as being a very functional director. I just want to get it up there as simply as possible. I don't think of myself as a stylish director. I don't know if you can recognise one film from another as mine, though friends say they can.

There is a difference, though, between your Jim Allen television play, *The Lump*, and the Jim Allen plays directed by Ken Loach, *Rank and File* and *The Big Flame*. *The Lump* has more dramatic structure.

The Lump was Jim Allen's first full-length play, apart from things like *Coronation Street* episodes. Before I arrived on the scene, Tony Garnett, the producer, had spent some time with Jim Allen, telling him he could write what he liked, he didn't have to worry about Ena Sharples characters or not saying 'W.C.'. So there is possibly a more conscious dramatic shape, even slightly melodramatic. But once we'd got the script together, that was it for me. I like to know that what you've got on paper is a marvellous thing to work from. You can maybe try things on location and bring it to a sort of life, but you shouldn't have to rely entirely on what you're going to do on location to make it work.

There was also the question of the actors. We used a lot of unknown faces—unknown then at least—apart from Leslie Sands. We cast almost entirely in the Manchester area. I don't use actors as Ken Loach uses them. There's the script and we've agreed the lines, so let's not change them unless it's going to fit a bit easier for an actor. I spend a lot of time in casting, preferably with relatively unknown faces if that's possible. I like getting close to actors, and getting the best out of them doing that scene, whereas I think Ken likes to have less actory performances and stands the camera back from the actors so that people who are not very experienced with cameras are not worried by them. He prefers to give them the brief of a scene and have something evolve. He has some very big film ratios compared with the ones I use. He also improvises much more within the script than I do.

When you are filming for television, do you work it all out beforehand—the set-ups, the angles and so on?

It varies. With the very first things I did I was almost storyboarding, but I got rid of that very quickly. With *The Lump*, for instance, we tried to film as though it were an actual strike situation and we happened to be there—a bit like the Peter Watkins method. For much of *The Lump* we just set the actors into the scene and said, 'Right, that's the situation, there's the scene, you know the words,' and then we just manoeuvred the camera round—a *cinéma vérité* situation. But I knew I was going to do the scene that way, the fight scenes for instance.

Leslie Sands (centre) in 'The Lump'

Is it simply that you have a working method which you prefer, or does it have anything to do with all the work you did on *Tonight*, where you're told you have a subject, go out and film it, and the format is to a large extent determined by the personality and style of the reporter?

I suppose about 95 per cent of the stories I did for *Tonight* were with a reporter, with Alan Whicker or Fyfe Robertson. So you knew basically what the structure was going to be like. Logistically, it had to be an interview situation, where you could film in a day or cut in a day, and this almost necessitated a certain style of shooting. Obviously it's easier to film an interview with just one camera set-up. I was an editor on *Tonight* before I started directing. What *Tonight* and Donald Baverstock and Tony Essex taught one was that there was nothing you couldn't find a way to shoot. You learned to shoot from the hip. There was hardly any situation where you couldn't find a way of constructing a little film story, with or without an interviewer. And this gives you enormous confidence. So when now you have a script, a crew, actors, all under control, you feel totally on top of it.

We did some quite advanced technical things on *Tonight*. It was when the lightweight camera and the transistorised recorder were just coming in. Before that it was all plodding along, having to set up situations and before the fast film stock came in, so it was very much like a reconstruction of an event. And then we started developing the *vérité* situation. Also, because your little film item had to fit into a programme of film items, the editing side was absolutely ruthless. Every foot had to have its value. I remember cutting a story Alan Whicker had made in Mexico about kneeling worshippers, and he did his little bit of introduction and then I had about 30 seconds of the worshippers on their knees with some music, just a little visual sequence. When it was shown at rough-cut stage, which would be at about two in the afternoon for transmission early that evening, there was

Police and strikers in 'Stocker's Copper'

no music on it and Baverstock said, 'What's that 30 seconds there for, just those pictures?' I said, 'Well, it's just the mood of the thing, there'll be some music,' and Baverstock said, 'I can ask two questions in 30 seconds in an interview in the studio. Are you sure that 30 seconds is going to make the story different and better?' So you had to be ruthless in the actual functional value of everything you did. And that, I think, has certainly crept over into all my other work. I like to think I'm not indulgent in any part of a film.

In television documentaries the subject is nearly always more important than the director or the style. Your own involvement tends to be with the people and the content.

I just like people, that's what interests me. I have done documentaries, like *Famine*, about the famine in Bihar, and *Death in the Morning* about fox-hunting and a film on Wall Street, which weren't about people in given situations. But the documentaries I did on Fiona Thyssen and on Paul Getty were like film biographies. I just like people to be in the foreground. If it's about people I want them up there. When I get scripts sent to me which aren't about people I get very bored with them. I got very bored with the action sequences in *The Reckoning*. It's fun thinking about it and cutting it, but the actual shooting is just a logistical problem.

You use a lot of close-ups.

I just like people's faces, and I don't think that is entirely because of television. I pull out if I think the whole body is important, but basically I just like getting close to faces. What it means is that wider angles have more dramatic impact. I'm very careful about building up scenes to get to a dramatic point with a closer shot than the previous shot, and then breaking them out and bringing them together again.

***Catholics* was constructed in that way, from the general viewpoint at the beginning to that final shot of Trevor Howard's face.**

Absolutely. There are moments in the film when the character is emoting, but we never get really close until the tracking shot when he is confessing about Lourdes, and at the very end when we go in even tighter. And we don't do it with anyone else in the film.

So many television documentaries now seem bland and impersonal. Is the 'objective' approach increasing because of pressures concerned with 'balance'?

The documentaries I made were always with a reporter or with a *vérité* approach, and none of them were pre-scripted. I suspect that more documentaries are being researched and scripted in advance now. I don't know why this should be. It may not be that it's safer, but just a question of economics, people preferring to know what they are going to do rather than just going out and shooting blind. I think there is a reaction against the *vérité* approach: 'Oh no, we're not going out with hand-held cameras again.' And it was a much abused technique anyway. There are only certain situations which lend themselves to *vérité* filming. I think the BBC Documentary Department, which is a world away from *World in Action*, is much more conscious now of a clean style and a clean story. But then there is *The Family*, which is from the Documentary Department and which is being cut from week to week. So it's difficult to generalise.

Have you seen *The Family*?

I've only seen snippets, so I can't really judge it. Except that when I heard about it I just wondered why. When we first started doing *vérité*, we used to say that it was a great opportunity to actually see things that people have only heard about and which have been reconstructed before, and that this should be the way into some sort of illumination. But the areas where that can really happen have become very small. The real point of *vérité*, I think, is that it only works when the events are more important than the filming of them. It's almost a mathematical formula: the quality of *vérité* is the reciprocal of the importance of the event you are filming. It's very difficult, if you are going to sit with a family for that length of time, not to believe that to some extent they are performing. From my own experience, when a *Film Night* crew came to do some filming of the making of *National Health*, I was aware of the camera and I messed up a couple of things. I knew what they were doing and I've done it myself, so of all people I should not have been affected by it, but I was.

Did the vérité approach influence the way you filmed the longer TV plays, like *Mad Jack* or the crowd scenes in *Stocker's Copper*?

Possibly in some scenes in *The Lump* which lent themselves to that approach. But *Mad Jack* was very carefully constructed, in the way the flashbacks were worked in with the poems. All that was very thoroughly worked out, right down to the eye movements. *Stocker's Copper* was freer, in some scenes. All one is trying to do is to use a filming style which makes you believe that those events are happening. And to a certain extent having a camera close to a situation, going with the subject rather than the subject going for the camera, is a sort of *vérité* approach. But again the crowd scenes in *Stocker's Copper* were carefully worked out. You know they are going to work in a certain way, you've given the cue. You've bunched up a crowd, and they are going to walk where you have told them to walk. Then you move the camera in to record it in the most dynamic way. As opposed to standing back and letting them approach in a wide angle, you actually come back with them. When you have filmed on *Tonight* for so long, you know when the event is real or apparently real as opposed to the lit shot and the carefully framed camera set-up. I spend a lot of my time now destroying composed shots. I often like to think there aren't any memorable shots in my films.

You do compose your shots, but you try to take the composition out of them?

Yes. But *Arturo Ui*, for instance, was very carefully composed. Brecht says in his introduction to the play something to the effect that each little grouping of characters should be telling its own story, in relation to the hierarchy, and I followed that in the film. Also it was shot in the style of an early Thirties gangster film—in fact it was called *The Gangster Show*. We deliberately shot it in black and white and with gangster film compositions because it was in a way a pastiche. So in that sense it was consciously composed, a deliberate copying of a style. I do compose, but I try not to make it *look* that way. I don't want to thumbprint every frame.

What is your attitude to colour, which can sometimes seem to take the edge off reality?

I spend all my time trying to take colour out. I spend a long time with the set and wardrobe and the make-up and the camera trying to eliminate colour. In *Stocker's Copper* there is no colour. There is the white clay and the brown clothes and a bit of green grass, but otherwise there is no colour—except when they are wounded and you see a bit of red blood, which was deliberate. Again, in *Mad Jack* we were lucky because they wore khaki uniforms. But you actually go round sets taking out *anything* that can attract your eye to any colour effect.

I don't really like colour. Documentary

colour is a killer, because there is absolutely no selection and you get a totally false sense of the images. It only needs one bunch of yellow daffodils poked in the corner of a slum and the whole film is different, it's totally out of balance. In the half-hour film which I have just done for the BBC most of the rushes are in black and white. In the rough-cut the black and white looks marvellous, but the moment the colour comes on you almost wish it wasn't there.

Does it bother you that television is generally less well regarded than film?

It bothers me less than it used to because I think people know now there is nothing marvellous in itself in a film being shown in a cinema with a bigger screen, I have always believed that. I'm not sure how much of it is rationalisation—coming from television and working mainly in television—but even now, when I've done four features, I think the best work I have done has been for television. I think that the average television week offers you more interest and illumination and entertainment than the average week in the cinema. There is more talent at work in television than there is in the British film industry, at any time.

But there is still a feeling that television is wallpaper. It just happens, and there is very rarely a sense of occasion.

I don't know. Has any feature film in Britain in, say, the last ten years had anything like the emotional and intellectual impact of *Cathy Come Home*? That wasn't an occasion, it was just a Wednesday Play. It became an occasion afterwards. But I really don't know the answer to this. Because my programmes go out and people talk to me about them—not television people, real people!—about things I have done which they have remembered. It would be very interesting to do some proper analysis, if you could measure it, of the impact of something seen in the cinema and something seen on television.

You prefer working in television?

I enjoyed making the films. But there are always pressures in the areas round making a feature film... like who is in it, will it work in America, is the accent too thick? When you work in television, you have a script and the head of the Drama department says, 'Here's the money, you have four or five weeks to shoot it, go away and make it.' And that's all that happens. The 30-minute film I've just made overran by a minute and a half. The head of the department doesn't tell me to bring it down to 30 minutes. He just said something that reflected a feeling I had about a particular scene, that it's a fraction long. He didn't say cut it out, and I needn't have done. It was just nice to have a straightforward artistic reaction to a scene. Whereas with a feature film there are always all the other reactions which have nothing to do with the film itself.

Though on *The Bofors Gun*, as far as I know, once the script was agreed—and John McGrath adapted his own play for the film, and it was what he wanted to do and what I wanted to do—there wasn't any comeback from Universal on the script or the casting or the cut. It was like making a film for television. In fact, all my features have been like that. But even though they may think the film is the important thing, there are also the packaging elements. I've never experienced that in television: the piece is all-important and the wrapping is secondary.

You can be limited by the scale on television sometimes. But with *Stocker's Copper*, for instance, it was like doing a Western. We had two hundred extras. It didn't look thin, I don't think, as regards the size of the crowd. And we came in under schedule, in 18 days. There was nothing missing which I wanted to put in. Two hundred people was plenty, three hundred wouldn't have made any difference, and I didn't think I needed any more time. So everything was perfect as far as I was concerned. The subject matter can also be a problem in television. I am sure there are areas which have to be looked at carefully in terms of script. If one wanted to do a film about Ireland, for instance, it might have to go through a lot of filtering processes for television, whereas it would probably have to go through much less filtering for the cinema. But the gestation period in television is so much less wearing. The half-hour film I've just done took fourteen weeks from being given the script to the dubbing, which is marvellous. To know that you're going to have a piece of work, with a very high standard of technical proficiency apart from anything else, wrapped up and under your belt in less than six months is very different from the situation on a feature. I'm very ambivalent about features.

Your new feature, *Who?*, is a spy thriller.

It's a difficult film to categorise. It's an East-West spy situation, and the protagonist is a man with a metal head, so there's a problem of identification. It is a complete metal head and a metal body—he's been involved in an accident—which we had some medical-scientific fun with. It's about a search for identity within an East-West spy framework, but leading to a broader humanitarian theme about... like *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, the two nutcrackers squeezing the individual in the middle.

It doesn't sound a very likely subject for you, a man with a metal head...

'The Reckoning': Geoffrey Unsworth with Jack Gold

No, it's not like me. But it's a very expressive head... We made it in Germany with a German crew, apart from an English editor. It's a strange area for me and I'm not sure how comfortable I was in it, how uncomfortable the film is at the end... But it was intriguing. And I'm trying to stretch myself into different areas, which I did. But I'm not sure. I've never been as unsure in a way about what the thing is like, about my own relationship to it.

Was it a conscious decision to move away from the more personal area of your earlier work?

Yes, it was. The two big changes for me in the last year or so were *The National Health*, because I'd never really done any comedy, let alone black comedy, and *Arturo Ui*, which was certainly non-naturalistic. I enjoyed making both of those. And *Who?*, I suppose, is probing out into a different area again. It's like an antenna going out, and then it gets a shock and you withdraw. When I was working on *Tonight*, I got to the point where I thought I couldn't do another documentary. I felt I'd had it, I'd exhausted all I thought I could do. So I moved into drama, where things were a sort of development of documentary—realistic, naturalistic, with a couple of little cul de sacs and offshoots. I now begin to feel that I want a change from naturalistic drama, and yet I keep getting back into it.

There seems to be a dearth of films at the moment which are specifically and recognisably British. I'm thinking of subject rather than style or personality. Is this because the area of social and political subjects is pre-empted by television?

I think television has had an enormous effect. I mean, the best writers in this country are working in television. The best writers who react to a situation, like Dennis Potter, Colin Welland, Jim Allen, who are aware of social differences and forces. They don't want to write features. They want to see their stuff made. They're happy writing for television because they know all their creative powers are going for that end. It's not having to be dressed up or changed. And up to a point it's the same with documentary. Robert Vas' films... who sponsors them, who buys them? They're bought by the BBC. *World in Action* is doing all sorts of things like housing problems, which documentaries used to do. The area of documentary that's missing is the Jennings area, and it's very difficult to get into that personal, authentic area. Television has little nudges towards it, but they're usually pretty safe areas. They do some very hard-hitting ones, like *The Block*, for instance, or the *World in Action* ones or the *Man Alive* ones. There aren't any subjects that are actually shirked, except perhaps certain areas that may be uncomfortable, like the police or Northern Ireland.

Then there's the gestation period for a feature. If you wanted to do something about the miners' strike, for instance, as a feature... by the time someone has put up the money for someone to do a script and by the time that script is written and has gone through the various committees of distributors, and by the time they've decided whether Michael Caine is going to be in a miner's helmet or a policeman's helmet... I mean, we go out and make *Stocker's Copper*. ■

'Golden Swallow' (Cheng Pei Pei, Lo Lieh)

THREADS THROUGH THE LABYRINTH:

HONG KONG MOVIES

Tony Rayns

Metaphor of the Labyrinth

It is quite probable that the West will never possess the key to the labyrinth of Hong Kong cinema; perhaps the Chinese themselves have lost it. The Hong Kong movies that have appeared in Europe and America since late 1972 are all martial arts genre films, and as such represent only one facet of Hong Kong film production. None the less, they form a more or less homogeneous group, whose directness of aim and boldness of method conjure Peter Wollen's notion of an 'archi-film' governing the themes and structures of the genre. And yet the precise nature and origins of this 'key' remain obscure. Sources as disparate as ancient Chinese drama, pulp fiction, the Italian peplum and the Hollywood fantasy are clearly evident. Many of the movies play like folk-tales or legends, and are built upon antinomic pairs like honesty/crime, humility/aggression, chastity/lechery, mercenary/fighter for a cause, and so on. The heroes seemingly acquire heightened powers at the moment of their greatest trial, like god-given strengths. In other words, social, cultural, historical, political and mythical issues are inextricably tangled, in movies whose only unifying characteristic is their broad, frank artifice.

The movies are almost our sole sources of information. The Chinese themselves have led the world in covering their own tracks: they make no attempt to document their own films, and their interest in foreign exhibition stops at the signing of the distribution contract. No country in the West has seen more than a small proportion of the total Hong Kong production, even within the one genre, and the vagaries of distribution ensure that (with obvious exceptions) no two countries see the same particular films.

The problems are compounded by flaws in the 'texts'. No Chinese film yet has played without censorship cuts; the British censor takes less offence at swordplay than at unarmed combat, but is prone to cutting short either style of fighting as the mood takes him. All but one of the Chinese films released commercially in this country have been dubbed, and for the most part dubbed insultingly poorly. And like the popular culture of any country, they are regarded as fair targets for 'adjustment' to the tastes of another: Lo Wei's *The Big Boss*, for example, plays here with a music track reportedly added in West Germany. Or even as targets for political hijacking: Do Kwang Chee's *Crush* first appeared in Paris in a version with situationist subtitles (prepared by the 'Association for the Development of Class Struggles and the Propagation of Dialectical Materialism') as *La Dialectique peut-elle casser des briques ?*.

Lore

In 1966, facing dwindling domestic box-office returns and a growing threat from television, the Hong Kong film industry majors set themselves the target of breaking into the American market within five years. It took them six: the breakthrough occurred at the Cannes film market in 1972, when

martial arts movies from both Shaw Brothers and their chief rivals the Cathay Organisation stole the thunder from the latest American pornography. Later that year Warner Brothers bought the Shaw film *Invincible Boxer* (released as *King Boxer* in Britain, and *Five Fingers of Death* in America) and watched it out-gross their own costly, sophisticated productions, especially amongst black American audiences; the first American-Hong Kong co-production, *Enter the Dragon*, followed in 1973. Critically scorned almost everywhere, the Chinese movies found immediate popular acceptance.

Hong Kong production peaked in the late Fifties and early Sixties at some 300 films a year, having maintained a steady, prosperous level for over thirty years. The industry was self-sufficient and self-perpetuating. Shaw Brothers not only produced forty films a year, but owned a chain of 140 cinemas across South-East Asia to show them. Co-production with neighbours like Formosa, South Korea and Malaya was the norm; there were occasional ventures further afield to Japan (Mizoguchi's *Princess Yang Kwei Fei* was co-produced by Daiei with Shaw Brothers). But the only movies that travelled West were a few ornate historical epics.

Meanwhile, during the Sixties, more than a hundred production companies, many of them small independents, were active in the territory. By 1966, with a shrinking domestic film audience, over-saturation of the market had become an acute problem, and wider expansion was necessary for sheer survival. The successful invasion of Western markets has generated a new series of international co-productions with Hong Kong, which have undoubtedly saved its domestic industry financially. The Italians have already sent Bitto Albertini and Gianfranco Parolini to film in the East; Britain's Hammer Films have a three-film deal with Shaw Brothers and have so far shot *Legend of the Seven Golden Vampires* (Roy Ward Baker) and *Shatter* (begun by Monte Hellman, who was apparently suspended for shooting 'incomprehensible rushes'). The effect of these 'international' movies on the integrity of purely domestic products remains to be seen. Many Hong Kong movies insist passionately on the need for national identity, but a movie like Shaw Fung James' *The Yellow Killer* (GB: *From Bangkok with Orders to Kill*) of 1972 was already duplicating the sex and random violence of recent American thrillers.

Theme of the Hero and his Fist

All martial arts movies, whether contemporary, historical or mythical in subject, centre on a hero-protagonist. In keeping with Oriental traditions the protagonist can be female (as in *Hap-Ki-Do* or *When Taekwondo Strikes*), but no heroine is ever permitted the same autonomy of action as a hero. With exceptions like Chang Cheh's remarkable *Golden Swallow* (GB: *The Girl with the Thunderbolt Kick*), which attempts to define the very nature of heroism through the characterisation of its hero as a ruthless obsessive, Chinese movies are not primarily interesting for their adumbration of the hero-model; for most, he is a pure convention. He is virtuous, diligent, chaste and loyal to his family (*The Big Boss*), his school (*Fist of Fury*), his country (*Beach of the War Gods*) or all three (*Way of the Dragon*). His duty is to avenge the victims of oppressors, who are customarily either Japanese or traitors employed by or employing Japanese (*passim*). He is patient, stoical in misfortune and sometimes handicapped physically (Wang Yu, the most prolific of Chinese stars, has played one-armed swordsmen for both major studios, and the *One-Armed Boxer* for Golden Harvest; David Chiang has extended the line in Shaws' *New One-Armed Swordsman*). His skill in martial arts, with or without weapons, is channelled to victory by the purity of his aims (*Golden Swallow*). The figure, and the revenge mechanisms through which he is propelled, find unexpected analogues in Western culture, high and low: the superheroes from the 'innocent' age of American pulp fiction—Flash Gordon, Doc Savage; the ritual bloodbaths of Jacobean tragedy.

Rather than the hero, then, it is his context, the reverberation set up by his actions, that gives a particular film its individuality. The hero's role as martial artist connotes an upholding of Shaolin or Taoist school philosophies, however 'sacred' (mythic) or 'profane' (realistic) the film. The connotation invokes an imagined historical image of social harmony—wrongs righted, tyrants brought down, criminals exposed—which in turn relates to the themes of invasion and domination, and to the hero's role as defender of his people. The historical reference is more wishful than actual, but it finds an adequate objective correlative in the first half of the short Yüan dynasty (late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries AD), when China was under Mongol occupation: the invaders abolished Confucianism, allowing Taoism and other faiths to flourish for the first time, while in North China a large number of 'music dramas' came to be written, satirising the oblivious oppressors, praising the virtuous and humbling the mighty. The Ming dynasty scholar Chu Chu'an classified the so-called Yüan plays by subject in his book *True Harmony* in 1398 (quoted by Liu Jung-en in his introduction to *Six Yüan Plays*); his list lacks only a dominant revenge theme to stand as a catalogue of motifs still prevalent in historical martial arts movies—human beings who become immortal, emperors and officials, loyal officials and martyrs, censure of the treacherous, knights errant and warriors in action, lovers, courtesans, the sorrows of parting . . .

Wang Yu's historical epic *Beach of the War Gods* (which he wrote, directed and stars in) adopts a variant perspective in its chronicle of a small army's stand against

Wang Yu (right) in his own 'Beach of the War Gods'

'The New One-Armed Swordsman' (David Chiang, Ku Feng)

Japanese invaders late in the Ming dynasty; its emphases are the nature of solidarity with the national cause, and the need for tactical strategy in defence. But, again, the appeal is less to national pride than to the audience's rapport with an idealised past, which unfolds as implacably as fate itself once its wheels have been set in motion. The movie ends—uncommonly—with the death of the hero, as he passes from an imagined life into intuited legend.

The hero's transparency as a character is yin to the yang of his prowess in martial arts. He reveres his teacher (hence Bruce Lee's paroxysm at the teacher's funeral in *Fist of Fury*), champions his teachings against foreign rivals like karate or Thai boxing, and ultimately epitomises the theory and practice of his school. A movie like *Hap-Ki-Do* confines itself to illustrating this process, and in effect becomes a stark abstraction from the genre. A rare virtuoso will practise his own idiosyncratic style of combat: literally, in the case of Bruce Lee, whose 'jeet kune do' was his own synthesis of strengths from Oriental and Occidental fighting traditions; or fantastically, in the case of mythic martial arts heroes, who are sometimes endowed with quasi-supernatural skills beyond the teaching of any school, like Lo Lieh's 'iron palm technique' in *King Boxer*, or Wang Yu's 'downward leap, like an eagle' in *Golden Swallow*. Bruce Lee's fighting scenes were substantially genuine (the actor devoted most of his 32 years to study of the martial arts), but the performances of lesser mortals are sometimes enhanced by special effects: in *Valley of the Fangs* Lo Lieh appears to jump great heights and distances, over houses, across gardens. As the hero fights his way up the villains' hierarchy, so he draws deeper on his reserves of skill and ingenuity; his *tour de force*, be it a secret skill or merely a supreme effort, is naturally held in reserve for his final opponent.

Fight scenes can occupy up to half the running time of a concerted martial arts picture; and those with particularly functional plots reduce to provocations, fights and aftermaths in strict alternation. As the Italians did for the gunfight, so the Chinese have established a new visual rhetoric for the presentation of hand-to-hand combat on film; their distinctive, unprecedented fight scenes are clearly a prime factor in the genre's international success, and it is inevitable that their influence will endure in the popular cinema of most countries. Chinese fights are hyperbolic—the hero and his colleagues normally face overwhelming odds—and are staged like a cross between acrobatics and ballet, with great sweeps of

Aftermath of war: Ti Lung (left) in 'Hellfighters of the East'

action carried through a crowd of performers. The likeness to dance is heightened by most directors' use of slow-motion inserts to pick out the precisely choreographed movements in detail. The soundtrack extends the hyperbole by amplifying the flurries of clothing and the sounds of blows and parries—flesh on flesh, bone on bone, steel on steel. The better fight scenes are either deliriously ritualistic (Wang Yu's massacre of the Golden Dragon Order in their lodge in *Golden Swallow*), or enthrallingly realistic (Bruce Lee's confrontation with the Russian in *Fist of Fury*); the best are both at once (the neo-gladiatorial climax to *Way of the Dragon*, set in the Coliseum).

Lee's pre-eminence in martial arts movies sprang from his ability to give dramatic body to the philosophies that inform the various disciplines; his inventiveness as an actor matches his fighting expertise. His provocative fighting stance—legs apart, knees bent, hands on thighs—seems to carry a sexual charge, confirmed by the transported expression and yelp of delight that accompany each connecting blow. He demoralises his opponents with glares of withering contempt, and underlines each move or hiatus with a cacophonous repertoire of animal-like screeches, wails and barks. His supreme contempt is to treat the bout as a joke, but even the most comic casual gesture can be inflected with a vicious intensity. Maintaining fully conscious control, he achieves the dream transmutation of the body into pure will; and the dramatic devices serve to demonstrate the process.

The fights are entirely emotional in effect, and are designed as audience rousers. The film-makers clearly found dramatic models in the Italian popular cinema: fights occur with the regularity of feats of strength in the Ursus, Maciste and Hercules cycles of a decade ago, many of which were distributed in the Far East by Shaw Brothers, just as their elliptical pacing recalls the gunfights in many Italian Westerns. They further echo the joyous excesses of nineteenth-century Chinese popular fiction, which retold heroic folk-tales brimming with cathartic violence, a tradition upheld this century in comic strips. Some movies take delight in realising ideas from animation or comics in their fight scenes: when a thug is sent crashing through a wall in *The Big Boss*, he leaves his outline punched in the wood.

Legibility of the Text

Hong Kong movies should be immensely seductive to would-be semiologists of the cinema. Their visual syntax is functional to an extent unique in contemporary commercial cinema; shooting and editing styles are 'primitive' in a way that exactly corresponds with the ingenuousness of plotting and staging. This fundamental lucidity of syntax not only makes semantic 'reading' of the movies more feasible, but also enables the more enterprising directors to accomplish effects that in any other context might have proved impossible: the curious 'double' time structure of Chu Yuan's *Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan*, at once languorous and concerted, or the patterns of screen masking used by Chang Cheh during the pre-credits scene of *Golden Swallow*.

All martial arts movies, like the popular cinema of other countries where sale to television is not an active concern, are shot in Scope. Most are made very fast and operate within a 'consensus' visual style, whose characteristics include: conventional medium shots (*plan américain*) for exposition; pans used only to follow action; frequent use of the zoom for emphasis at moments of climax; avoidance of unnecessary cutting. Camera set-ups are rarely repeated, suggesting that individual scenes are often shot in sequence, and effectively edited in camera. Many of these characteristics are no doubt determined by circumstance: rapid shooting leads to a preponderance of 'neutral' middle-distance shots for exteriors and close-ups for interiors; poor depth of field with the anamorphic lenses leads to greater use of the zoom to pick out detail.

Most independent productions are made on location, while Golden Harvest and Shaw Brothers movies are shot in the studio whenever possible; the studio films naturally essay more interesting effects with decor and lighting (*The New One-Armed Swordsman, Fist of Fury*). Larger-scale productions are more likely to feature complicated set-ups (mobile camerawork, crane shots), but editing structures remain consistently simple. Of the movies seen here, only Lee So's excellent *Magnificent Chivalry* (a relatively independent production, starring Wang Yu) boasts anything resembling a *caméra stylo*. An introductory scene, for example, shows the hero being entrusted with a secret mission by his superior, and the camera films the briefing in long, measured tracking shots, circling the table at which the two men are sitting; the circular movement 'expresses' the ritualised formality of the meeting and 'preserves' the secrecy by inscribing a literal ring around the characters, thereby suggesting the inviolable sanctity of the hero's pledge to execute his duty.

The twin tendencies to stylistic convention and dramatic archetype naturally propose expressionism as an idiom. Many of the films make at least partial use of the idiom as a natural recourse. The prevailing sense of oppression in *The New One-Armed Swordsman* is made palpable through sombre, underlit interiors and the setting of exteriors at night or in torrential rain. The tragic flaw that drives Wang Yu to such extremes in *Golden Swallow* is expressed through the deep scar across his forehead. In Chang Cheh's *Four Riders* (GB: *Hellfighters of the East*) the city of Seoul in immediately postwar Korea is defined as a mixture of neon jungle and wasteland, with

'Way of the Dragon'. Above: provocative fighting stance (Bruce Lee); below: transmutation of the body (Chuck Norris and Bruce Lee)

a hospital that is also a prison. In Chang Cheng Ho's *King Boxer* the hero's invincible 'iron palm technique' is shown as a literal glowing of the palms. And in *Intimate Confessions*, which works throughout as a Z-movie *Scarlet Empress*, gauzy veils are consistently played off against cold steel, in a reflection of the plot's patterns of feminine 'frailty' (enforced submission) and masculine dominance.

Vestiges of Myths

Chang Cheh's *Golden Swallow*, noted above for its unusual thematic interest in the nature of heroism, is like a cypher for the curiosities of all Hong Kong movies. On the one hand, it is the most folkloric of movies, with a perfectly organic body of motifs at its core. Its three principals are colour-coded by dress (gold, silver, black). The girl (gold=purity, value as a prize) is associated with a waterfall, suggesting soft, yielding, feminine qualities, but also turbulence. The two men who love her are opposites. Her dream lover (silver = steel, a dispassionate exterior) is associated with fire, here suggesting revenge, masculine aggression, but also inner turmoil. Her protector (black = self-denial, absence) is associated with earth, suggesting his homeliness, dependability, but also clumsiness. The true lovers have the names of birds—swallow, roc—associating their passion with the fourth element, and the idea of flight.

The paradoxes are elaborated elegantly: Silver Roc seeks Golden Swallow, whom he has loved since they trained at the same school, and so frames her for a series of killings that he himself commits, in order to draw her out of hiding. He justifies the killings by choosing only the corrupt and the criminal as victims, but his executions draw the wrath both of relatives of the victims and of the authorities, which puts Swallow's life in danger. Roc hides in a brothel where one of the courtesans loves him; Swallow eventually comes to him there, disguised as a man, and begs him to call off a duel with his rival, her protector, who once saved her life. But Roc insists on fighting the duel. The duel is interrupted first by Swallow and the courtesan, then by the vengeful leader of the gang decimated by Roc in one of his provocations; Roc is mortally wounded by his rival when he moves to defend Swallow from the gang leader. Fulfilled by Swallow's tearful assurance that she loves him alone, Roc pulls himself back from death (his spotless white tunic now stained with blood for the first time) to fight off the remaining gang members single-handed. Finally, with four daggers implanted in his chest, he stands triumphant with arms outstretched and chokes his last words: 'As always, I am the master swordsman.' Rather than show him die, the director dissolves to a fiery setting sun, bringing the elemental imagery to a pantheistic climax. Swallow builds his grave by her waterfall, and she and the courtesan vow to spend their lives tending it; her protector, defeated, leaves the valley.

All memories of the past—usually associated with images of insubstantiality, like drifting veils or wind through the long grass—are haunted by treacheries and betrayals or lost opportunities. The present is uniformly dominated by Silver Roc's harsh moral code, proceeding only through contradictions and reversals, leading Roc himself to an inevitable, futile *Liebestod*. An honourable lieutenant in the villain's gang, hauled up for refusing to obey a wicked order, without hesitation chooses to guillotine himself rather than face execution, and carries the act through even when Roc's sudden appearance offers him the chance of escape. The only hint of a perspective on this code comes later when the villains, seeking to coerce his father, frame a little boy with petty theft and the child commits suicide to spare his father a beating. Later the mother, driven mad with grief, wanders the empty streets at night with a lantern, wailing for her son. . . By domestic—or indeed any—standards, these strains of dramatic and visual imagery are a remarkable success.

Veils and cold steel: Betty Pei Ti in 'Intimate Confessions'

On the other hand, though, looms the awkward, unbalanced plotting that seems an inescapable corollary of all attempts to break away from purely generic elements. The pre-credits scene (a flashback to the rival lover saving Swallow's life) works brilliantly as a half-glimpsed lightning memory; but the stylistic counterpoint with the main body of the film alone cannot anchor a scene that is dramatically adrift. A framing device—the end matches the opening in Swallow's secluded valley—vainly seeks to impose a structure on intractable material. Chang Cheh's *Four Riders* has comparable ambitions, and similar flaws: there, a chaotic structure shatters and finally dissipates the earnest attempt at a statement on the spiritual aftermath of war, despite the overt deference to Ibanez and Peckinpah. The failure of both films is certainly more interesting than the same director's routine success in *Duel of Fists* (GB: *The Chinese Connection*); exploration is always more interesting than consolidation. And yet it seems clear that disturbance of the genre's essential *unity* of theme, style and formal discipline leaves a director surprisingly vulnerable.

Bruce Lee's genial *Way of the Dragon* lends the same issue an opposite perspective by playing innovations strictly within the genre. Its plot is essentially that of his first feature, *The Big Boss*. Here directing and scripting himself, he has made the martial arts movie's lineage from the peplum explicit by transposing his country hick character to Rome, and by setting the climactic bout in the Coliseum. But divorced from its roots in Chinese culture, the generic plot cannot function efficiently, and it grinds itself down into travelogue relentlessly. Seemingly recognising the problem, Lee tries to counter it by emphasising the continuing domestic rituals of (expatriate) Chinese life.

It is only at the climax that the film attains its real orientation, by making the most dedicated stand yet seen for the dignity and purity of the martial arts, abstracted from nationalism and melodrama alike. This development intimates a genuine innovation, and one that is fascinatingly supported by what seem the movie's weakest elements: the lead-in comedy sequences, the steadily emphasised narcissism. Lee's last completed film, the American-written and directed *Enter the Dragon*, fights shy of confirming the development, preferring the safer ground of a tired Anglo-American genre. The slipshod compilation *Bruce Lee: Man and Legend* offers clips from the movie on which he was working at the time of his death, *The Game of Death*, but not enough to determine its qualities. None the less, *Way of the Dragon* is a sufficient achievement to suggest that a martial arts film might exist independently of the elusive genre that pioneered the field.

In his essay *The Modesty of History*, Borges observes that all ritual runs the risk of being some day invariable, but that sometimes a surprising (maybe shocking) innovation will expose the path to a different future. The Chinese martial arts movie, so impure in its origins, yet so precise in its formal demands, is perhaps no more than a counterfeit ritual, a masquerade; its assiduous, energetic directors have leant so far towards variety that their model is no longer decipherable. But the hint of real innovation in *Way of the Dragon*, a solidly generic film, constitutes a further, tantalising clue to the nature of that model. ■

CANNES 74

Barbara Valentin in Fassbinder's 'Angst essen Seele auf'; Gayle Hunnicutt in Georges Franju's 'L'Homme sans Visage'

Only the most diehard or blinkered movie addict, one suspects, could have survived this year's Cannes Festival with his faith in the cinema entirely undented. Possibly this would hold true equally for most of the festivals now operating on a free for all basis, otherwise defined as more means worse. But at Cannes there is very much more; and the general impression is not hopeful. Whatever the shortages may be elsewhere, movie trash is still a great growth industry—there's a sense in which Cannes, with its precariously surviving elegance, has become a universal dumping ground, and the festival's unfathomable selection procedures ensure that at least some of it ends up on the Palais screen. Bad films are simply bad films, and always with us. But there's also a feeling in the air of waste and irresponsibility and loss of contact, of men with perhaps more talent than sense who are not so much fiddling while Rome burns as prepared to throw the fiddles themselves to the flames. In a non-vintage year, Cannes encourages sombre reflections on the sorry state of absolutely everything. Fortunately, there are still a few good movies around.

A characteristic, absurdist text of this festival was the Paris court's judgment on the action brought by Carole Laure, the actress in Makavejev's **Sweet Movie**, who had asked for the suppression of two shots in the picture—one 'exposing to the public without her consent . . . the only intimate portion of her anatomy which remained to be exposed.' Makavejev, said the court, 'cannot claim that his work is gravely mutilated, since . . . this film has a sufficient number of scabrous scenes to satisfy fully the most demanding spectator.' Whatever the rights of the case, it's a bizarre situation, with the heavily ironic tone of the judgment adding its own acid flavour. I didn't see *Sweet Movie*; but those who did seemed almost universally disappointed, not by the undue exposure or otherwise of Miss Laure, but by its evidence of talent adrift among the options and excesses of the 1970s.

Litigation also hangs over Alain Resnais' **Stavisky**; in this case, an action brought by Stavisky's son, who claims—as under French law he is able to do—that the film traduces his dead parents. Stavisky's public sins and swindles may have been scarlet; his son's complaint seems to hinge on the suggestion of a private peccadillo—Stavisky presenting his wife with jewellery acquired at a knockdown price from a woman he'd slept with. It would be a great pity if the action causes serious problems for this accomplished film, at once the treat and the disappointment of the festival. The treat is in watching a picture made with such consummate grace, a white-tie performance at a festival in jeans, the sort of film that teaches *Gatsby* a lesson. The disappointment, to me, is the lack of that sense of productive tension between writer and director that has marked Resnais' other work.

One might have expected Jorge Semprun to have wanted to develop more of the public story, the machinations of this boisterous swindler whose downfall rocked governments. But in telling the story of the engaging villain whom he first encountered in a wax museum—and then imagined to be a hero—Resnais' aim is not of course the sharp edge of factual exposé; and it's perhaps unfair that one should feel the lack of it. Instead, this is Marienbad by daylight: great hotels, hot-house flowers, Rolls Royces, Anny Duperey in Delphine Seyrig's feathers, the smile on the face of the swindler while the carpet of deceit is being pulled from under him, the complexities of betrayal. Beautiful subtleties in the performances of Charles Boyer and some minor players; rather less from Belmondo, who is Resnais' first extrovert hero. I have a feeling, though, that impressions should be provisional until a second viewing. The threads which the film works into its pattern—including Trotsky's French exile, and one oblique but intriguing reference to Stevenson—are multiple and delicate. The figure in the carpet is, once again, the sense of the past.

It is six years since Resnais' last film; Rainer Werner Fassbinder seems to make one every other week. His **Angst essen Seele auf** (its English titles seem to be several and assorted) tells a rivetingly plain and double-edged story of an elderly charwoman who marries a Moroccan immigrant worker some twenty years younger than herself. Everyone in sight is outraged. She herself treats self-contained, alien Ali almost as a trophy (significantly, her son kicks in a television set as an alternative to kicking Ali); and perhaps never more so than at the end, when he's strapped down and comatose in hospital. A published synopsis suggests that at some earlier stage the film was to have ended with the murder of the charwoman. The actual denouement might be read as a stage along that road; or, more sentimentally but also more plausibly, as a victory for the pug dog tenacity of Brigitte Mira's performance. Fassbinder's tableau style, on the face of it so anti-dramatic, develops a powerful, old-fashioned sense of sheer involvement. What will the neighbours do next? Will the grocer make it up

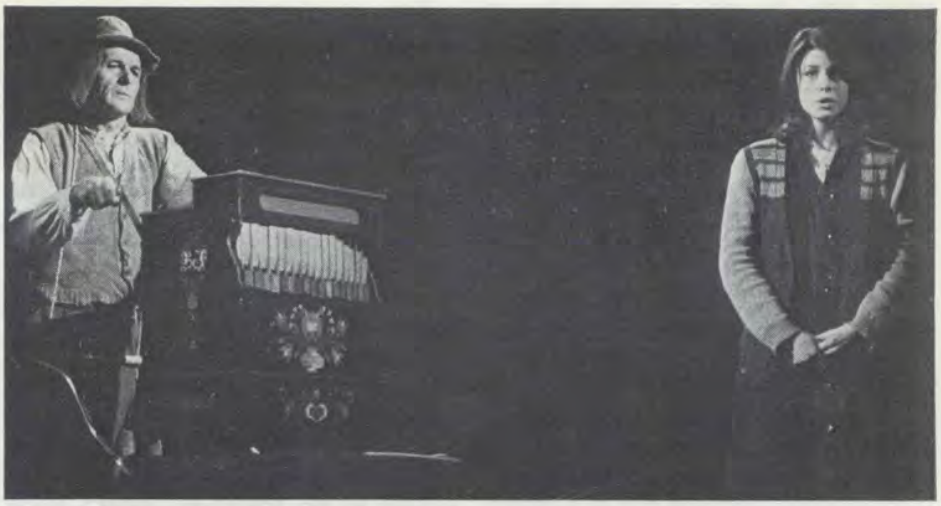
with his old customer? From what might seem the cold heights of a parable, Fassbinder achieves an odd and affecting mastery of Coronation Strasse.

A German-Swiss film in the Critics' Week, Thomas Koerfer's **The Death of the Director of the Flea Circus**, is overtly a parable: consciously Brechtian, carefully distanced, worked out with great gravity, but in its first hour drily and delightfully comic. Ottocaro Weiss loses his performing fleas in a crop-spraying operation, seeks compensation from the sort of government agencies where fleas would never be found, and after a chance encounter with a macabre village pageant transforms his enterprise into a theatre of the plague. The meaning of this symbol, and its relation to anarchy or fascism, becomes the film's concern; and Weiss worries at it with the intellectual resolution of a Teutonic terrier, barking up every theoretical tree that the subject might suggest. Wit and concentration see him through; and in François Simon he has a marvellous actor, sharp, mournfully intelligent, as fragile and stalwart as one of his own fleas, winning a total sympathy he never demands. Kluge would seem to be the main influence on the film; and an influence most positively assimilated.

The Critics' Week gave us **A Bigger Splash**, which Richard Roud writes about and which brightened a British entry that—with the exception of *Mahler*—was otherwise almost invisible. (According to *Cinema TV Today*, Union Jacks on the Croisette were being flown upside-down, as distress signals.) And the Critics' Week yielded, in Peter Davis' **Hearts and Minds**, arguably the most thorough-going of the Vietnam films, travelling the troubled road again through a mixture of actuality, new material and some exceptionally revealing interviews. Like many such film-makers, however, Davis fails to identify the origins of his footage; and although this may seem a pedantic quibble, when the issue is controversial questions of the source and original purpose of the documents can never be irrelevant. The point, which applies as much to screen evidence as to the printed word, was in fact made in another Critics' Week film, Jerry Bruck's **I. F. Stone's Weekly**, in which the spry investigatory journalist, chirpy as a cricket, talks solid good sense nineteen to the dozen. Nothing special as a movie, the film is an invigorating celebration of a great radical newspaperman.

More eccentrically, another film was made by its human subject: Barbet Schroeder's picture about General Idi Amin, shot by Nestor Almendros, in which Uganda's extraordinary ruler seems continually on the verge of taking over direction of the movie. Irresistible while showing off the local crocodile colony to his visitors, Amin displays exactly the same gusto while describing his vendetta against the Israelis and staging a desert rehearsal, with his own army, of victory on the Golan Heights. Nudging the cameraman into filming his helicopters or his elephants, laughing hugely, presiding over a most remarkable Cabinet meeting, Amin is given any amount of rope by the film, with the usual results. 'You're a card, sir.' 'Dangerous?'—'Very.'

Documentary can be reviving in a festival where fiction often seemed to be drifting mistily into the past. The Japanese entry, Shinoda's **Himiko**, drifted furthest: a saga about 'a very, very ancient epoch', featuring a pert priestess with a chalk-white face, and any amount of mooning, posturing, blood-letting and very, very ancient hocus-pocus. Or there was Liliana Cavani's **Milarepa**, in which a young Italian student survives a car crash and is then translated (with his mother and professor to keep him company) into the identity of Milarepa, the Tibetan sage and poet. The idea of linking epochs, countries and spiritual experiences is bold enough almost to deserve to work; but Miss Cavani, I'm told, has mixed too much Jung with her Tibetan culture, as well as staging the whole thing rather optimistically in the Apennines. The film is hard-working; sometimes (as when Milarepa is struggling to build a stone tower to the capricious demands of his spiritual instructor) it almost gets there; but the total impression of high-flown charades is unavoidable. And with Pasolini, who has moved on from Boccaccio and Chaucer to **A Thousand and One Nights**, the past is the same old country—wonderful locations at the service of rambling, garrulous anecdotes, as though the magic carpet, poised for take-off, were grounded by an encounter with an Ancient Mariner of the soukhs. There is, too, something arrogant about Pasolini's Italianate takeover of everyone else's legends, with Ninetto Davoli still on duty as the universal simpleton.



'The Death of the Director of the Flea Circus': François Simon, Janine Weill

The American entry was interesting. I haven't yet caught up with **The Conversation**, Coppola's by all accounts shrewd and deserving prize-winner. But in general the Americans seem to realise the direction of European regard for their cinema, and to have stopped worrying about sending 'art'. Robert Mulligan's **The Nickel Ride**, about the downfall of a small town fixer, is a disappointment: a modest picture with quite a bit to be modest about, spreading the blanket of nostalgia even over corrupt local politics. But Hal Ashby's **The Last Detail** knows exactly where it's at, sending its three sailors on the archetypal rounds of bar and train and bus station and cheap hotel, and preserving its sense of balance, scale and detail. Jack Nicholson's acting award must have been won by several lengths. Robert Altman's **Thieves Like Us** is based on the Edward Anderson novel filmed by Nicholas Ray as *They Live By Night*, and most people seemed to find it very inferior to the Ray version. I'm not so sure: the clock can't be turned back, and one wouldn't expect Altman to duplicate Ray's passionate identification with doomed youth. His version is ironic, oblique, set very deliberately in period (1930s' radio provides its constant counterpoint), and built on that framework of just off-centre obsession which is the mark of Altman's style. Keith Carradine and Shelley Duvall do well enough as the young couple, but the most striking performance is that of Louise Fletcher as the convict's wife who gives them shelter, accommodating the housing of fugitives into a family life at once hopelessly footloose and resolutely disciplined.

Finally, three films from the fringes in assorted styles, any of which might repay a British distributor's attention. Bo Widerberg's **Stumpy** sounds dire: a fantasy about a six-year-old, not very advanced when it comes to reading and writing and tying his bootlaces, who is a natural soccer genius and becomes the prop of Sweden's team. But Widerberg, in his most relaxed and gentle mood, keeps the idea going beautifully, feeding in a string of amiable notions (like the child's bedtime book which sends the whole team to sleep) before finally retiring the harassed, exhausted prodigy to his lessons. Footballing children may find the soccer scenes not absolutely persuasive; but Stumpy himself invites maximum identification.

The Cars that Ate Paris is a first 35mm. feature by a young Australian team, director Peter Weir and producers Hal and Jim McElroy, and a long way from Barry McKenzie land. Paris is a drab little place in the outback which sustains an extremely sinister relationship with cars—a wrecker community, where gentle old ladies rootle through the suitcases of travellers whose road ran out at Paris and then sit on their porches lovingly polishing hubcaps. Disaster comes, in the classic style, through the arrival of an outsider—a small, despondent fellow with a voice like the cry of a plaintive mouse. In tone, the film is slightly reminiscent of such oddities as *Night of the Living Dead*: alarming and sardonic, raw but not unsophisticated, a genuine exploitation of one of those changelessly pastoral settings as a breeding ground for nightmare.

Franju's **L'Homme sans Visage** was

waved away by some people as 'just a television pilot'; in which case, one wishes he would come over and bite some of our series directors. An opening title, most promisingly, plunges us into the mystery of the lost treasure of the Templars. There's a murder by a hooded man, who in his off-duty hours pops into crone's disguise to run a shabby little back street shop, a villainess all in black, stalking the rooftops with a blow-gun in her boot, and a mad doctor busy perfecting a race of robot killers. Franju, in other words, is wholly back in the world of Feuillade and his own *Judex*, and the film's best scenes—Gayle Hunnicutt drifting among the chimney pots, classic murders on a train and at a police station, a car edging fatalistically down night streets, the last marvellous shot of the villains retreating into a Feuillade townscape—show that he retains all his access to the country of dreams. Dialogue scenes, admittedly, are rather flat, but in this world dialogue was never exactly the point. The film is a beautiful reminder that there's no hope of doing this sort of thing through pastiche or the exercise of critical intelligence: the director must be a Franju, plugged in to the basic, enduring movie myth, the dark poetry of the thriller.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Cannes this year was something of a death-trip. The most characteristic sound was that of Sondheim's 'Death Waltz' for *Stavisky*, the biggest splash that of stale holy water being sprinkled about. The first week was dominated by **Stavisky**, which elegantly sounded the death-knell of a civilisation, the end of Biarritz-Bonheur; or, if you prefer, which evoked the melancholy of the last days of frivolity before that war which began in '36 and has yet to end. Stavisky may have been the film's subject, but it was Baron Raoul, as played by Charles Boyer, who told us, in the words of Giraudoux, what it was really about: 'The dense fluidity of death.' And what better description of Resnais' camera style?

The second week was dominated by Bresson; the nominal subject of his film was the intermittently self-thwarting love of Lancelot and Guinevere, but Bresson was as much interested in depicting the end of something—the feudal dream, courtly love—and the beginning of modern times (i.e. modern warfare), as in the romantic aspects of **Lancelot du Lac**. And just as Resnais' camera movements expressed the true meaning of his film, so Bresson's insistence on shooting, literally, from (and to) the hip was justified by the final slaughter of the knights, who are shown massacred from above by men with crossbows in the trees.

La Paloma, the Swiss-German film by Daniel Schmid shown in the Critics' Week, was a kind of high-camp version of *Camille/La Traviata*. His Viola, however, is not content to die peacefully. Instead, using a diabolical, and not entirely justified, stratagem, she reappears in the last quarter of the film in order to force her lover to hack her body to bits. True, we then discover that it was all a dream—the 'power of imagination' infecting the obscene parody of Robert Taylor/Armand when he first glimpses the condemned Camille in her night club. But this was only a dramatic convention, for the 'happy' ending was belied by the style and tone of the whole film. Much more fluent and accomplished than Schmid's first film *Tonight or Never*, *La Paloma* was, I felt, also more successful than the works of Werner Schroeter with which it was inevitably compared.

Far from bourgeois Switzerland, the Poles, in their Critics' Week film, took us on another kind of death-trip. The publicity material maintained that the ghoulish couple who murder two old people for their money and are subsequently condemned to death were a product of bourgeois society of the 1930s—for **Through and Through** is based on a true story. But this couple can be found in any society: two marginal wrecks who are incapable of making their way, two Kafkaesque losers. And the style was truly Kafkaesque: bleak and tortured. This was a first film by a director called Krolikiewicz; and there were those who thought it was too much an *exercice de style*. Maybe, but it took me in: rigorously elliptical in its narration, it lifted the trap door on that peculiarly middle-European brand of sordid despair which is always so off-putting for Anglo-Saxons.

Once Upon a Time in the East was the official Canadian entry: its title is of course ironic, referring to the East End of Montreal which, like other east ends, is the less desirable part of town. Its view of life on the 'Main' was unremittingly bleak, whether treating a housewife who wins a million dollars in trading stamps, only to have the friends who have come to help paste them in books try to make off with them, or dealing with the denizens of a transvestite cabaret downtown. Conceived in mosaic form, with each character somehow related to the others, the film is occasionally very funny, especially in its brilliant use of language. It is based on a group of characters created by the well known French-Canadian playwright Michel Tremblay and has been directed by Tremblay's usual stage director, André Brassard. They, too, participate in the camp aesthetic, like Fassbinder and Schmid, with the result that a lot of people didn't realise that the clichés were meant to be clichés and were used as such. I would have thought that the use of irony was if anything over-explicit, as when the film contrasts the male transvestites who are so eager to take on the superficial attributes of women with the real problems of real women—like the one who actually dies of an abortion in the final scene. But irony often goes unperceived at Cannes.

I suppose something must be said about the 'hit' of the Directors' Fortnight, Dusan Makavejev's **Sweet Movie**, but all I would like to say is that it confirmed my diagnosis of his earlier films: essentially Makavejev is an opportunist. Politically opportunist, in that he once again uses the technique of attacking right and left, capitalism and communism, not with any even-handed sense of justice, but more to make everyone happy. Opportunist also in his reliance on shock value. Sex, we know, is passé, so in this film the shocks come from the digestive and excretory processes—*all* of them. I suppose it is something to have infringed these earliest of childhood taboos, but the poverty of Makavejev's imagination is beginning to be obvious to everyone.

There were, mercifully, at least three films that 'spoke up for life': Jack Hazan's **A Bigger Splash**, Alexander Kluge's **Leisure Time Occupations of a Slave** and Rivette's **Céline et Julie vont en Bateau**, the first in the Critics' Week, the last two in the Directors' Fortnight. *A Bigger Splash* is—and is not—a documentary about the painter David Hockney, his private life and how that affects his work. Beautifully photographed (West Eleven is made to look like Bath), it could also be considered as a fiction film that happens to have 'real' people playing their own parts. But then, that too could be said about Hockney's paintings: they are a combination of faithfully rendered reality and a vision of an imaginary world that is bigger—and better?—than life. And that is why the film works so well: it bears the same relationship to Hockney's work that the paintings do to life.

▶ page 181

'A Bigger Splash'

IN THE PICTURE

A Princess in London

Almost the first person to greet journalists visiting the shooting of the new Merchant-Ivory production, *The Autobiography of a Princess*, at a Kensington house was a plainclothes guard complete with gun belt, who sternly demanded to see press cards. The reason was soon visible around the neck of leading lady Madhur Jaffrey—a necklace and earrings valued at nearly a quarter of a million, which Ismail Merchant had somehow persuaded Garrards of London to lend them. In evoking the last days of the British Raj, the film takes up themes from several earlier Merchant-Ivory works; but this time the setting is a quiet London house, where the princess, scion of a Rajput court, spends her time reminiscing on past days of glory with a retired Englishman (James Mason) who was once attached to her father's court.

For a year or so, James Ivory and Ismail Merchant have been talking about 'the maharajah film'—records they had collected of the lost splendours of the Indian courts, made up of newsreel material and also of home movies kept as personal records of the 1920s and 1930s by some of the Indian princes. Now, they have found their framework for this historical footage, as the princess entertains the Englishman to tea and a movie show. A counterpoint is woven between her rose-coloured memories and more uneasy aspects of feudal India as encountered by the Englishman. (One maharajah, apparently, had his entire polo team executed after they failed to bring home a trophy.)

The Autobiography of a Princess is being made on a small budget for N.E.T., and the London schedule was restricted to five days shooting plus one for rehearsal. No wonder that the small upper-floor room doing service as a set was crammed full of very busy-looking people—half-a-dozen technicians led by Walter Lassally at the camera, Merchant, Ivory, the two actors, plus the eagle-eyed representatives of Garrards. Looking down from the walls were a portrait of the princess' Maharajah father and a large Indian mural; next to the tea-table, a 16mm. projector pointed towards a screen near the door; in the grate, a friendly fire was burning.

In the first scene I watched, Madhur Jaffrey was describing to a very benign and relaxed James Mason the little pranks her father played on visiting Indian princes: 'He used to buy up all the joke shops in London.' In the easy, glancing flow of the dialogue (each player has several very long speeches) one quickly discerned the hand of Ruth Prawer Jhabvala, now rejoining the team as a scriptwriter. They did another take to get a point of English accenting right; Lassally flashed out instructions, adjusting a few lights and asking the actors to maintain certain positions (there being absolutely no room for camera manoeuvring); and a tricky sound problem was solved by placing a microphone among the teacups.

After lunch, a new set-up saw the camera with its back to the window overlooking the street, as Miss Jaffrey switched off the lights before a film session. Ivory had clearly done all his work at rehearsal and there were only a few whispered instructions to the actors. The main problems here were for Lassally, confronted with some tricky zoom changes as Miss Jaffrey moved around. At one point, she dried in mid-speech (received in startled silence until Mason broke the ice with a gentle smile and a pat), but by the third take Ivory seemed satisfied with the pacing and intimacy of the exchanges, and both crew and jewellery were packed off home for the night.

Talking afterwards, both Merchant and Ivory enthused over the sheer professionalism of their two players—'it would have been quite impossible to do it in a week with people who did not know and understand the script.' They were to take off almost immediately for America for yet another project: *The Wild Party* (another return to the 1920s) adapted from a long poem by one-time *New Yorker* writer Joseph Moncure March. This is being shot in the Mission Inn in Riverside, California, an extraordinary baroque hotel, now rather a relic, crammed with religious paintings, as well as a room full of wax models of the Papal Court, dispatched by the Vatican to a long distant world's fair, later acquired by the then owner of the Mission Inn, and now somewhat knocked about by vandals. *The Wild Party* is again being made for American television, Walter Lassally is once more the cameraman, and James Coco heads the cast. The poem itself dates from the 1920s, but Joseph Moncure March still lives in California, and James Ivory was hoping for a chance to talk to him—perhaps to check his own reading of the lines. He wrote another long narrative poem on which another film was based: surprisingly enough, it turns out to be Robert Wise's boxing picture *The Set Up*.

JOHN GILLETT

The Way We Were

When planning for the National Film Archive's 'Britain in the Thirties' season at the NFT began in January 1973, it was felt that this would be regarded as a small-scale academic event, attracting a specialised audience of London-based historians and film researchers, together with a smattering of enthusiasts from the general public whose interest would be based largely on nostalgia. The non-fiction holdings of the Archive, from which the films were to be supplied, would be publicised; and one or two myths about the value of film as evidence of a period would hopefully be exposed when people were given the opportunity to evaluate the visual record, as they would any other historical document, in its entirety rather than in extract form. Discussion sessions, chaired by historians, were planned to provide a forum for this debate about film and history, and political commentators and film-makers from the period were

'The Autobiography of a Princess': James Mason and Madhur Jaffrey with James Ivory

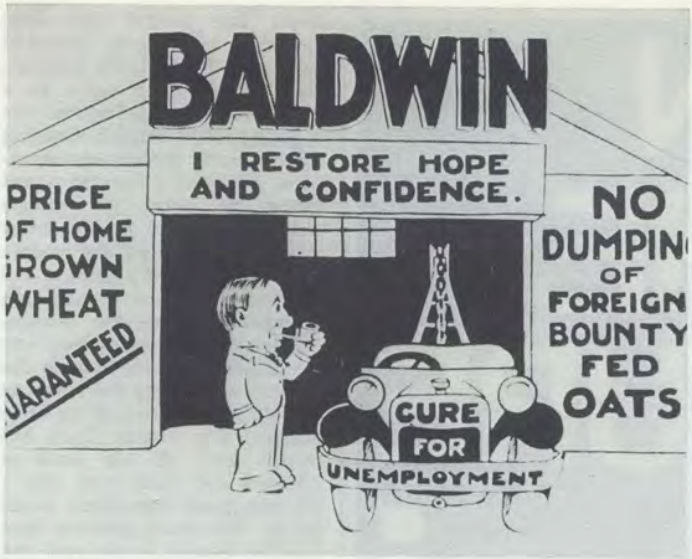
invited to give their reaction to the films.

In the event press and audience response was wide-ranging, catholic in taste, and based on general interest rather than professional knowledge. Of course the economic climate in February 1974 was peculiarly apposite—a miners' overtime ban, then strike, the three-day week, rising unemployment, and finally a General Election which brought in a minority Labour Government—a situation not unlike that of the 1929–31 period against which one of the political propaganda films in the season, *The Right Spirit*, was directed. No one felt it worth mentioning that these films came from the National Film Archive, nor complained that for various reasons some of the obvious contenders for inclusion had had to be excluded. The films were taken at their face value, and created more interest than any individual title merited.

In this respect the grouping of films into programmes dealing with specific themes was of paramount importance. A screening of *Housing Problems* in an evening of films by Edgar Anstey and Arthur Elton, or of seminal films from the British documentary movement, throws little light on the living conditions of sectors of the community in 1935. But when it is shown, as here, with *The Great Crusade*, a propaganda film about the National Government's housing policy, *Kensington Calling*, an amateur but effective appeal film for the Kensington Housing Trust, and *Enough to Eat?*, about the nation's diet, it can be seen in its context as a vital social record as well as a startling and influential piece of film-making. Edgar Anstey emphasised precisely this point: for him this was a time of great optimism, slum clearance and nutrition had become political issues and something was at last being done about them, and he and others could harness the new media of sponsored documentaries to these causes.

The inadequacy of film evidence in certain respects was highlighted by Lord Fenner Brockway and Alan Campbell-Johnson in discussion with Dr. John Roberts after the screening of the second of two programmes about pacifism. All three were surprised at the amount of film on this subject which had been preserved by the Archive, yet there were conspicuous omissions: Gandhi, the supreme pacifist, was neither shown nor mentioned in any of the films, and the League of Nations was hardly touched upon. Nevertheless the speakers concluded that the films reflected a genuine national mood of horror over the First World War and a determination that the European conflicts should not be allowed to infiltrate Great Britain. A selective view of history is, after all, a common characteristic of most popular contemporary comments on current affairs.

After the films on politics, John Barnes remarked that there could be no clearer example of the sort of knocking copy which would not be allowed on television today than *Peace and Plenty*, Ivor Montagu's indictment of Chamberlain and the National Government. Coincidentally, the BBC turned down the offer of an extract from this film because of the General Election: overt propaganda, even if thirty-five years old, had no place on the television screen during the run-up to an election campaign. Contemporary echoes were also heard in *Today We Live*, whose Rhondda Valley mining sequences, director Ralph Bond explained, were filmed and scripted as a community project, a forerunner of the community video projects which are now financed by private money and regional arts associations, rather than by government bodies like the National Council of Social Services, which sponsored this 1937 film.



Political cartoon from 'The Right Spirit'

Not unexpectedly, the Spanish Civil War films were emotionally received. The audience ranged from falangists wearing their Carlist berets to anarchists who winced every time Professor Hugh Thomas, who chaired the discussion, identified one party to the conflict as 'Nationalist'. Ivor Montagu described his cathartic experience of filming in Madrid, and choosing escape with the evidence rather than a heroic death in action. Two of the Progressive Film Institute's films, *Spanish ABC* and *Madrid Today*, were shown, and the PFI's coverage of the return of the International Brigade's British battalion at Victoria Station in 1938 would have been included if only more than a mute, incomplete cutting copy had survived.

But it was the home movies whose candid approach prompted the most eloquent and pertinent of the season's reviews: 'The most evocative document of the period . . . is a collection of home movies—scenes jumbled with the inconsequence of surrealist images: weddings, car breakdowns, picnics, conversations seen and not heard, unidentified relatives who seem to have walked straight from *This Happy Breed* to perform crazy little dances on the back lawns of suburban semis for the amusement of the cameraman. Who they were and what became of them in the imminent war we shall never know. They still live on the screen, however, vividly if mysteriously, in their era and our memories.' (David Robinson, *The Times*.) Numerous home movies have been offered to the National Film Archive since this screening, but none capture the atmosphere of suburban home life so well as these anonymous films, which were discovered in a house due for demolition. Here were films, insignificant in their time, which provided insight into social 'mores' in a way that volumes of social histories bristling with footnotes could not hope to achieve.

It is in the area of social history that the 'Britain in the Thirties' films were most useful. As Professor Sidney Pollard was quick to point out in the discussion held after the screening of films on health, welfare and housing, film has a unique role to play in twentieth-century historical studies. Professor Pollard considered the 1930s material on city development to be the first comprehensive visual survey on the subject which could be compared with statistical records kept since the beginning of the century. As such, the importance of the films could not be underestimated now; and forty years from now, when a new generation of students will remember only a few of the buildings if redevelopment continues at its present pace, the films would have an even greater significance.

VICTORIA WEGG-PROSSER

Steppenwolf

It has been a very long time since Fred Haines, a Californian brought up in Arizona, first decided to film *Steppenwolf*. In those days, some seven years ago when the Hermann Hesse cult was barely simmering, he fancied he would have on his hands some kind of underground movie. He would have liked big studio support but never believed it possible, since Hollywood was hardly likely to look with favour on an ex-story analyst at Columbia with ambitions to become a director, even if he was one whose first feature screenplay had received an Academy nomination.

Haines admits cheerfully to a chequered career in the industry and to times, when nursing his project, which almost had him defeated. But after finishing his own screenplay early in 1971, he secured the backing of Peter Sprague, a lively New York entrepreneur with no experience of the film world, and the services of Max von Sydow as Harry, the Steppenwolf. Later, Dominique Sanda and Pierre Clémenti joined the cast. The film was shot (by the Yugoslav cameraman Tomislav Pinter) last autumn in Basle, the site of the original story. But the difficult process of perfecting its version of Hesse's Magic Theatre, the central section of the book, was completed in Hamburg, London and at Elstree.

Haines, who now lives in Basle, went to Columbia University and Berkeley before embarking in the early Sixties on a man-of-all-trades career as announcer, reporter, dramatist, producer and manager in radio. At the same time he also worked in the West Coast underground film movement. After two years as a Columbia story analyst he gratefully moved to Europe, where he began his association with Joseph Strick on the BBC-TV election documentary *The Hecklers*. Strick made him executive producer and co-author of his *Ulysses* adaptation, the screenplay of which was nominated for an Academy Award in 1968. There followed two directing credits, one for *Round Trip*, a short documentary about Henry Miller in Paris for the filming of *Tropic of Cancer*, and the other for *The Baddest Daddy in the Whole World*, an hour-long portrait of Muhammad Ali centred round his fight with Jürgen Blin. Shown at the 1972 Venice Festival and on television in half a dozen European countries, it made Haines a name apart from his work as a screenwriter, though it can't have done much to persuade a cautious industry that he was ready to handle *Steppenwolf*.

Haines says that making *Steppenwolf*, with a crew and cast of some thirteen nationalities, was surprisingly unlike the nightmare he anticipated when, just before shooting was due to start, he ran out of money and had to leave his flat in Basle. It's a medium budget movie, running to about 1.2 million dollars, and has been shot in English, which Sydow, of course, speaks perfectly. He is scarcely off the screen for a moment and it will be his performance that will make or break the picture. That and Haines' version of the Magic Theatre, which has Sydow moving schizophrenically around and through the paintings of Mati Klarwein with the aid of a

highly sophisticated video electronic mixing device known as the 'Blue Box'. Triggered by the colour blue, the equipment can successfully make use of a painting the size of a large postage stamp as the *mise-en-scène* for a human figure.

Technically this 25-minute section of the film was, says Haines, a masterpiece of innovatory techniques. 'We did things we didn't even know how to do, or at least how they would turn out. Sometimes we just invented as we went along. We had television engineers in England and Germany who work all the time with things like beam-clipping electronic feedback when they make commercials. It was the first time they'd had the chance to do the same for a serious project, and they were only too delighted. It's extraordinary how little the cinema really makes use of the full technical resources open to it.'

Haines is a little more guarded when he talks of Hesse and the book itself—chiefly, one suspects, because he's concerned not to be accused of making a cult film. He taught himself German to get into Hesse's world and regrets the fact that so many young people use his ideas as some kind of bible. 'I don't see the cultist view that *Steppenwolf* is a book to live by, though it's certainly one from which we all have something to learn. Thomas Mann rightly said that in its way it is as experimental as *Ulysses*, and its whole conception certainly seems immensely appropriate to our own times. I suppose you could say that it really began to have its effect in America after the Democratic Convention of 1968, when the committed among the young finally became disillusioned with the political process and adopted a more quietist approach after Mayor Daley's thugs had dealt with them.

'But it's wrong to think that Hesse was a quietist himself. He took a very active role in the promotion of German literature and in the political process itself. But he happened to write *Steppenwolf* at a time of great disillusion, much like the era we now find ourselves in. It's essentially a religious message—that we have in our possession everything we need to find salvation. Hesse's true home was really among the early German romantics. From them he took a love of nature that wasn't as precious as theirs. Man, he said, would only separate himself from nature if he tried to conquer it. When he wrote the book, Hesse was full of doubts in view of his very realistic appreciation of what was going on in a world that had learnt nothing from the 1914-1918 war. He was struggling towards a concept of living that has since become more popular. He had a desire to turn his back on outward realities, to contemplate his navel. But if he was fiddling while Rome was burning, at least he had his face to the flames, as Orwell said of Henry Miller.'

Steppenwolf is not, Haines says, a film in the current nostalgia mode. 'But it's all set in its time, and has a magnificent score from George Gruntz, the jazz pianist and composer, and others. Pierre Clémenti sings at one point, which should be an experience. The music's vital—it doesn't make sense without it. I probably have more musical cues than there are in Kubrick's last two films—sixty in all. There's Mozart, Wagner, jazz, chamber music, music for synthesisers and a mock 1920s song, which Clémenti sings. If I was asked what it was about, I'd simply say it was about a fifty-year-old man who learns to dance instead of committing suicide.'

DEREK MALCOLM

Oberhausen 1974

Few festivals can match the 20th anniversary celebrated by Oberhausen in April. Launched in 1955 by two short film enthusiasts, Hilmar Hoffmann and Will Wehling, the 'Westdeutsche Kurzfilmtage' reached their peak in the mid-Sixties, presenting an astonishing array of shorts from all over the world. The Festival's motto, 'The Way to One's Neighbour', had a quite specific meaning in the days of the Cold War, with East German delegates eventually bursting through the Bonn red tape and participating alongside other Eastern European visitors.

After the 'events' of 1968, those particular political battles seemed won. Instead of surviving on all cylinders like Cannes, however, Oberhausen has stalled badly. The 1974 gathering was ill attended, and one could not help thinking that the best shorts had been neglected by the selection panel. The opening night's programme was devoted to 'Solidarity with Chile', but most of the entries demonstrated that good politics and good film-making rarely go hand in hand.

During the days that followed, there were some noteworthy shorts among the hundred or so in competition. The Yugoslav and Czech programmes were consistently good, and the Hungarians contributed the Festival's most original work, *A Mother*, shot and directed by Ferenc Grunwalsky with a haunting emphasis on natural sounds and close-up detail as a gipsy girl is persuaded by degrees to recall the birth of her baby. Easy to dismiss *A Mother* as indulgent, but there's a whiff of discovery, a feeling that Grunwalsky is searching for a new type of film language. Zoran Tadić's *Braids*, which looks at Dalmatian peasant women washing and plaiting their hair, is cast in somewhat the same idiom: wordless, told in eloquent close-up, an unforced metaphor for skill and patience at every level.

Animation, as usual, saved the day at Oberhausen. There was the customary bunch of 'mini-cartoons' from Zagreb Studios, and Jan Svankmajer was in fine fettle with *Jabberwocky* and *Leonardo's Diary*, the former a dazzling feat of *legerdemain* as toys and nursery objects spring quaintly to life through stop-action technique, and the latter an often hilarious 'animation' of Leonardo's drawings, interspersed with bizarre images from modern life. Borowczyk and Lenica were made famous by Oberhausen a decade ago; Svankmajer belongs in their company now. The funniest cartoon, *Och! Och!* by Bronislaw Zeman of Poland, piles one excruciating joke on another as some mainland creatures seek to reach a weird island that rises in the sea close by. Sadism and violence are conveyed here with more punch than live action would allow, and the pay-off line is witty enough to scotch one's guilt at having laughed so uninhibitedly at the massacre preceding it.

Like those unfortunate mainlanders, Oberhausen seems bent on self-destruction as a festival. To recover its status it must make quality the absolute criterion for entries (David Wand's *Christmas Down and Out* was the only worthy British film in the week), it must attract more overseas visitors, and it must offer more adequate translation facilities. The goodwill exists, but 'The Way to One's Neighbour' could assume an altogether wider relevance than in recent years.

PETER COWIE

Across the Board

Locus—Stage 4 at Elstree Studios, where the dénouement of *Murder on the Orient Express* is being shot by Sidney Lumet. Most of the set is occupied by an elaborate snowscape, which will be glimpsed through frosty carriage windows; the all-star cast, in permanent attendance thanks to the demands of Agatha Christie's plot, are confined to a railway carriage at its centre.

Focus—Anthony Perkins, actor, stage director and deviser of puzzles, here playing the millionaire victim's private secretary.

Throw to start—'There's a computable number of original games; there are about seven basic models. What Steve (Sondheim) and I intended in *The Last of Sheila* was to give the audience as many clues as possible, visual, aural, verbal. We had both seen *The Lady from Shanghai*, and Steve had worked on *Beat the Devil*; we had a certain type of fast-moving, light-hearted picture in mind. I think that Herb Ross tried for another mode of story-telling, so that by

Max von Sydow in 'Steppenwolf'

the time the characters got off the boat, the audience couldn't really believe that there was more to come.'

First Moves—'*Friendly Persuasion* was made at the time when the phrase "a New York actor" had some weight behind it. Wyler let it be known that he wanted New York actors for three parts in it; I had the advantage of being in a play at the time, so he could come and see me. The first time we met he said "I want you to play this part." Under a Paramount contract I didn't have that great a choice about the things I did. Let's face it: the 1950s in Hollywood was a very arid period. So many of the pictures I made are terribly disappointing today, and they were when they came out. I bought my freedom from the studio after *Psycho*, because I felt I wasn't doing enough good pictures. Something like *Desire Under the Elms* is definitely what I mean about lack of art in Fifties Hollywood.'

Spend Night in Haunted House—'Hitchcock had seen me in a picture, and engaged me without so much as a hello. He doesn't enjoy auditioning actors, he doesn't like to say "no". The film was shot with a TV unit, almost as a lark. He didn't take it very seriously, there was nothing . . . *heavy* about it. He does pre-plan, but (unlike so many people who do) he's quite ready to change things. We discussed every scene: what it should be like, what should be shown, what should be indicated.'

Convicted, Go Direct to Jail—'I really don't know how *The Trial* started. I think Welles tried to find something that would be useful for me and would still satisfy him. Although there's plenty to criticise in it, at least it was a picture he wanted very much to make. Shooting it was really like silent films; everyone got together and did things. At one point we did completely run out of money, with one scene still to shoot—the uncle and me in a car. There were no lights, there was nothing. Welles fastened the camera to his shoulder, and worked out a strap that he could use to pull the car while he was filming. By pulling it, he kept the exact distance away that he needed to maintain the focus. But he wasn't quite strong enough, and so the other actor and I each put one foot out and kind of pushed the car along like a scooter. That scene is in the picture, just like that.

'The script was very thorough; we rehearsed very seriously, and very concentratedly. The first few days that Orson was directing me, he seemed to be pushing me towards this cringing, whining, hand-wringing toad of a character. Naively, I asked, "Aren't you afraid that the audience may get the impression that Joseph K was guilty?" "Of *course* he was guilty, guilty of everything!"

'*The Trial* is where I learned to love dubbing. I'd always resisted it, but with Orson I saw for the first time how creative the process could be. Since then I've dubbed as many of my scenes in as many pictures as I could. It gives you more freedom during the shooting, and it gives you a chance to re-evaluate, and paint over the canvas with another colour. As Orson put it, the very least you can expect from a well-dubbed line is that it will be as good as the original.'

Stranded in Fog, Miss a Turn—'Chabrol came to me with a script that was so utterly confusing to me (and to many who saw *Le Scandale*, I guess) that I had to say yes. I couldn't believe that there weren't some pages missing or transposed, or in twice. I did the picture to find out what the plot was—which, incidentally, I never did do. Chabrol is another director who is open to any suggestion . . . I'd say "Why don't I play this scene by the swimming pool in my dinner jacket?" and we'd do it. On *Ten Days' Wonder* Welles kind of had the last laugh because of his make-up . . . he and Chabrol had an off-and-on relationship, sometimes they didn't agree at all. I much preferred the making of *Le Scandale*; there was too much money around on *Ten Days' Wonder*.

'I was amazed at Chabrol's insistence on improvisation. At the climax of *Ten Days' Wonder*, where I had to fling myself out of the window, we arrived at the location and he didn't have anything worked out. The light was failing, and so we had to do it. He said, "Just jump through there" . . . "Don't you think we'd better have a look what's out there?" . . . "I think there's sand out there," and with that he himself ran through the window, head-first. It was one of the most incredible things I'd ever seen. He hurt himself quite badly; there was machinery out there, furniture, pieces of wood. He picked himself up and said, "Well, I guess that's not a good idea." He never advises the actors in any way; everything I did was totally improvised. In the 'Garden of Eden' shot, Jobert and I found ourselves lying on an ant-hill; they had dug up some earth to improve the composition, and the ants were in a state of total frenzy. I was terribly bitten during that scene; I remember showing these wounds to Chabrol, who roared with laughter . . . '

Current State of Play—'Spending a lifetime doing nothing but acting in films seems like not enough to me; that's why directing plays has become so important, and things like *The Last of Sheila* screenplay. Although you try to make a stage performance as spontaneous as it can be, it can never have the immediacy of a film performance. Although you have as much as possible worked out beforehand for films, there's never enough time to make it total. It's better to give in to the inconsistencies of the two media, not fight them.'

TONY RAYNS

Anthony Perkins (left) in the all-star line-up of suspects facing Albert Finney's Poirot in 'Murder on the Orient Express'

Play It Again

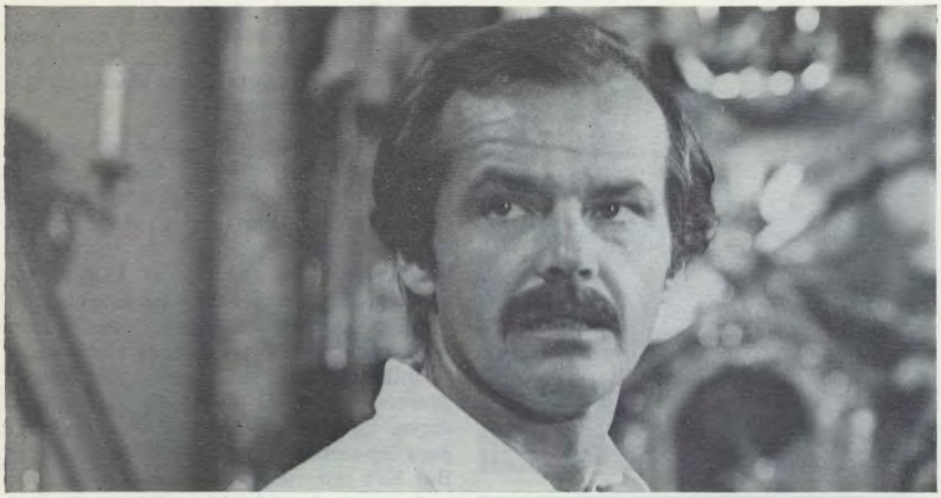
Warner Brothers were 50 last year (thanks to Rin Tin Tin, who got them solvent past their wooden anniversary) and felt like celebrating. The birthday high spirits were reciprocated, not least by two major Warner retrospectives launched by the American Film Institute and the National Film Theatre. The company has marked the occasion for permanent nostalgia by issuing a two-volume, twelve-sided set of recordings: soundtrack snippets all the way from *The Jazz Singer* to *Dirty Harry*, and music and songs from Ruby Keeler on her 42nd Street cab to Lucille Ball in *Mame*.

The project was launched with characteristic thoroughness. Warners engaged a statistics-minded psychologist to conduct a survey of their most popular films. From an original list of 1,600 titles almost 100 favourites were picked out; and it would be no surprise to a social historian that *Casablanca* topped the poll. Sam plays his song on side three.

Appropriately, for a studio which persevered with lush background scores when their rivals were opting for more talk (those first Vitaphone words had been an afterthought, of course), the music records spotlight a sextet of composers long associated with Warners: Harry Warren (from his Berkeley films), Korngold, Steiner, Waxman, Tiomkin and Alex North. Some of these extracts are substantial enough to jog more than a memory of a title theme; some fifteen minutes, for instance, from Korngold's inventive *Robin Hood* score. And some of the sleeve notes themselves deserve to be set to music. 'The hot, humid New Orleans milieu and the undercurrent of sensuality are captured by plaintive saxophones, insinuating brass, nervous pizzicatos, rolling piano figures, and languid blues' seems a bit over-syncopated for a brief snatch from Alex North's music from *Streetcar Named Desire*.

A list of the titles featured on the dialogue records would be enough to confirm the 1940s as the vintage Warner years, for all the musical magic and social dramatics of the Thirties. Some of the excerpts (a Crawford-Davis brawl from *Whatever Happened to Baby Jane?*) are tantalisingly brief, at the expense of dreary monologues from the likes of *Camelot*. But here also are some unforgettable finales: Edward G. death-defiant in *Little Caesar*, Cagney on top of the world in *White Heat*, the laughing crescendo in *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. 'You ain't heard nothing yet' meant more than they knew.

DAVID WILSON



Jack Nicholson: left, in Antonioni's 'The Passenger'; below left, with Ellen Burstyn in 'The King of Marvin Gardens'; below, filming 'Drive, He Said'

PROFESSION:

ACTOR

An Interview with Jack Nicholson
by John Russell Taylor

Right now, Jack Nicholson is one of the most bankable actors in Hollywood. If you have him cast, and a project which otherwise seems halfway viable, you should have no problem raising money. And yet, when one looks a little closer, this is curious. He is, for better or worse, no Robert Redford, and few of his films have been blockbusters either in intention or in achievement. Even his present situation is paradoxical. It sounds pretty impressive—new films by Antonioni and Polanski completed, to be followed by films from Ken Russell and Mike Nichols—but one must remember also that the last films of Antonioni and Polanski have proved very disappointing commercially, while after *Day of the Dolphin* even Mike Nichols cannot be regarded as commercially infallible.

Not that this is particularly surprising in the light of Jack Nicholson's career to date. Despite his recent Oscar nomination (his fourth) for *The Last Detail*, he has never in any way played it safe, and he remains the sort of actor who gets nominated but never seems to get the Oscar. Ever since he graduated from playing colourless, fresh-faced juveniles in Roger Corman movies to writer-producer-star status on Monte Hellman's *The Shooting* and *Ride in the Whirlwind*, he has had respect; and since *Easy Rider* he has had a name and some pull as well. The way he has used this situation so far is a spectacular instance of the pattern which became very familiar in the cinema of the Sixties: filling in the blank cheque.

Always, of course, within the limits of the possible; the art is to know what the limits of the possible are. When he began as an actor with Corman, Nicholson had no defined ambitions to be anything else. He began writing, like so many actors, in the hope of bettering his position, by collaborating with another actor on a script for Lippert, the last of the B-feature units. He wrote another script with Monte Hellman, which Corman did not want to do, regarding it as 'a non-exploitation, quality piece of writing.' But Corman suggested that if they could come up with two action Westerns at a certain figure he would finance them. From then on Nicholson continued, first of all to create employment for himself, with writing and producing. Hence *Easy Rider*.

JACK NICHOLSON: I became involved in that primarily through production. At that time I was co-producing *Head* with Bob Rafelson at BBS. Dennis Hopper and Peter Fonda brought the property in. They showed it to Bob and myself first. We ushered it through the financing, bringing a deal in and so forth. Then they started shooting in New Orleans, had production problems and had to change crews. And I got in my crew, that I had been working with independently, to make up the nucleus of Dennis's crew for *Easy Rider*. I don't know what happened between Dennis and Rip Torn, who was originally supposed to be playing my role; but I was approached by Bert Schneider, I always assumed, as much to oversee the production as to play the part. When they were shooting I didn't do anything on the production side; I was just there, and mainly paid attention to my acting job. Afterwards, at everyone's request, I had a go-through of the editing of the film, from where my character entered to the end. Henry Jaglom had a similar job with the first half of it at the same time. That was the next-to-last stage of editing. It was just a very close collaboration of a lot of people.

Did the success of *Easy Rider* have much to do with your getting to make *Drive, He Said*?

It probably had something to do with it, though I already had it set up in principle as part of the deal I had to co-produce and co-write *Head*. Of course every little bit of

power and pull helps. At the time I didn't think the film would be commercial. There were already other college milieu films on the market, and though I felt certain I would make the best of them, I didn't think that would be enough. Also, I realised that if you have a drama with two central characters, neither of whom is totally right or totally wrong, and the interest is divided very evenly between them, you are breaking one of the first rules of financing: the first thing anyone asks is, where's the rooting interest? The people to whom I had submitted this as one of three projects I would like to make disagreed with me. They were thinking college film positive, while I was thinking college film negative.

My view at the time was that I wanted to make this film. I wasn't particularly concerned as to whether it was commercial. I felt it was a subject through which I could say a lot I wanted to say. One of the things I like about the college film is that when people are naive and young, for me they have the licence to *state* a philosophy; it never plays right with older characters. If you're working with an academic community as a microcosm, it is more organically right that characters can speak dialogue with a more philosophical turn. The milieu does not make it overly pedantic, as it would be if you had two milkmen walking along talking about the poetics of playing baseball or the psycho-sexual dynamics of taking part in a team sport.

Those are topics actually discussed in the film. But they are also central to the drama: they are what it is *about*. You have these two central characters, Gabriel and Hector. Gabriel is a Reich-influenced, young, politically revolutionary character, who believes what Reich said about politics. His action through the film is the life of Reich: he was right, what he was saying was right, no one believed him, it drove him crazy, and he was institutionalised.

I had a stand-up, knockdown fight with your Trevelyan over censorship of the film, because he wanted to cut just one line, which is when at the climax of a love-making scene between Hector and the Karen Black character she says 'I'm coming'. I believe he thought I was crazy to argue over, in his view, such a small capitulation, but for me this line is the crystallisation of what the whole film is about: the battles of the characters, and their varying abilities, to release this sexual power. Olive is the freest of the characters. Gabriel goes crazy under the stress of his vision. Hector is not too intelligent, and his natural drive is towards conformity; he has difficulty making the necessary connections between his physical abilities and his place in society. Hector and Gabriel represent totally opposed philosophies, but they are living together, and neither is completely wrong or completely right, neither is meant to be wholly sympathetic. It would be foolish to try to force one of them into an unquestioned hero position: they are living in the same room, involved in the same activities, and they are totally opposed.

And yet even Hector, when he tries to do something in the scene where he is negotiating his contract, does try, within his own terms, to be revolutionary. Within Hector's realm of actual expression, he tries to go

Jack Nicholson with Sandra Knight in Roger Corman's 1964 film, 'The Terror'; in Monte Hellman's 'Ride in the Whirlwind'; and in 'Easy Rider'

ahead with the career of a professional sportsman and yet do something new in line with his own private code of ethics. The film might almost be called the Bill Walton story. Walton has expressed the very philosophies that Hector Bloom expressed in relation to his professional career. What other films do you know that produced immediately afterwards the archetypes which were only projections when the film was made? It has streaking as well; it has all sorts of things which speak, I now feel rather immodestly, for the vision of what we were doing at the time. I wish it had been more successful then. I would probably be closer now to directing again if it had been financially successful. But I'm almost totally pleased with the film, whether many people got to it or not.

Both *Drive, He Said* and *The King of Marvin Gardens* have had very restricted releases. Is there any way, in the present pattern of distribution, that films like this can work commercially?

Not unless there is some way of merchandising films as one would fine art, with a film playing in one or two theatres only and the price of admission adjusted to the degree of specialisation of the market and the intensity of demand. If I were not economically dependent on this film business I would love to try it. But it does not even work out too well in the more traditionally established arts. For instance, *The King of Marvin Gardens* is essentially very Kafka-esque. Everyone knows Kafka, everyone pays lip-service to him as a great writer. But he's not exactly a publishing item to make anybody rich. Now I honestly feel, to put it naively, that if I were Kafka's agent, or if I published Kafka, I would have found some way to achieve some sort of proper remuneration for what he was and what his writings are.

In the film, I consider the character I played a one-roomer, which is what Kafka was, a man who lives in one room—that's a very specific image, and one that relates to more people than we would care to think about. When I act I try honestly to represent the peer-group, and that's what the peer-group is there. But we don't like to look at them in life, so you can't expect a film audience that is used to riding the back of a hero, or revelling in the audacity of a villain, to identify with these people in a conventional way. But at the same time, this doesn't mean that the film shouldn't be widely available to people who might want to see it. It's a process, really, of educating the audience as you go. On a panel I was part of recently we had a lot of questions about the actor's social responsibility. Now I think that the actor's responsibility, more than supporting a candidate or something, is to support a film like *The King of Marvin Gardens*, which otherwise simply wouldn't get made. That is an *actor's* way of influencing the system; it is what he can do to help in educating people, which as we all know is finally the most important way of affecting society.

This sort of education of taste is perhaps especially necessary because both *Drive, He Said* and *The King of Marvin Gardens* are rather unAmerican films, in that they don't use narrative to articulate their meaning.

The narrative in both films is implied, while the meanings are more explicit. Which is perhaps more characteristic of European films. And you know, the education of popular American taste through increasing familiarity with foreign-language films has not happened as people predicted it would: audiences for foreign movies have been declining in the last couple of years. Despite his great success in distributing *Cries and Whispers*, Roger Corman maintains that much of the apparent advance of foreign movies in America came about quite simply because of their greater sexual explicitness, and once the American cinema caught up with that the new audiences melted away, leaving only the specialised film buffs. That's a chilling point to me. But it seems to be true: all the American audiences'

supposed greater education, through *Jules and Jim*, 8½ and so on, to more sophisticated formal approaches to viewing narrative, to viewing character, to viewing observations about humanity, seems to have evaporated. It now seems that the reason for the success of *Blow-Up* was that it included the first beaver shot in a conventional theatre. It's a success such as Antonioni had never had before and hasn't had since.

And what do you think is going to sell the new Antonioni, *The Passenger*, to audiences?

The new film is a risky film; all the films I've done in the last few years have had huge risks attached to them, though fortunately people are willing to gamble on the possibility that they just might bring the big one in. The risk of this one is that the strength is in the structure of the film. There is a narrative, but it's fragmented in a particular way which makes still a second or third narrative point. The basic theme of *The Passenger* is an identity change: it deals with the area of fantasy and the subconscious in a man who says 'Why don't I just walk out of my life and become someone new tomorrow?' It deals with the releasing of all the super-psychic energy which is locked around that fantasy, and makes the comments about why you can and why you can't do this, how far it's real and how far it's a fantasy. Its success depends on whether it can express a very high-flown and esoteric theme compellingly. The structure is that of a mystery; the man who chooses the change is in a very mysterious situation, and the film tries to reach out and capture an audience by shaping itself fundamentally as a very long and elaborate and elusive chase.

I found working with Antonioni a tremendous discipline. It was very hard work, and there was tension between us at times, because that's the nature of work on this kind of thing. And of course Antonioni is always very much the master. With some film-makers you feel that maybe the films have happened by some sort of accident, that perhaps critics have read into them things that aren't there. But with Antonioni what is in the films is exactly what he meant to put there. He deserves his position, and people working with him accept it—he's not holding it like a dictator, in many ways he's very open. He told me that he approaches every scene as though it were a documentary on the material of the scene; he doesn't want to have too much of a preconception of the scene.

Every way of working produces its own obstacles. Here's a man of whom everyone is always saying 'What the hell is Antonioni up to? What is it, Michelangelo?' Well, he almost can't tell them, because once he tells them, that's all he'll get. He'll get no input. His real function is to inspire input, and so fill up the outline of his images. If you see a flat image that goes dead in one of his films, it's probably because he has been unable to turn his collaborators on. And it's a problem, when you have such a huge reputation. I mean, people are scared to ask simple little questions like 'Do you mind if I wear my own belt?', because there are so many other, bigger things involved. Mike Nichols has some points of similarity. I took note of Truffaut's process, which is direction as the answering of all these uncertainties. Now Truffaut is mild; I'm sure he's as firm as this automobile we're sitting in, but he doesn't make you afraid to ask these dumb questions. His work is much more baroque than any of these other people we're talking about, because he has this multiplicity of contradictions within his very shooting unit which has evolved from his style as a person. Any approach can work: you pay your money and you take your choice.

Antonioni's basic approach to his actors is 'don't act, just say the lines and make the movements.' He doesn't make dramatic constructions, he makes configurations. And the simpler you can be, the clearer will be the configuration. If you mess the interior up, and so break up the interior part of your character, you will in fact be working at cross-purposes with him, because he is looking for clarity in that area, so that the configuration can be seen. If you break that up, you are working against the style in which he is working. That was hard for me to learn, but I'm glad I did it. It made it easier for me to work with Roman Polanski when I moved on to his film, *Chinatown*.

Roman is another kind of dictator. He loves arguments, he wouldn't know what to do if he had no arguments. And by that I don't mean fights. Arguments. But he never loses any, so there is no real argument. That's his creative problem. The average person, he has two arguments, he feels he's had a good argument, and if there's no movement he stops having the arguments. But Roman will go on for ever. So his problem is to keep people caring and stimulated enough to bring him the Truffaut questions. And this time he managed to do it. We were the only picture at Paramount this year that came in under schedule. He was very reasonable. The only shots that ran to a large number of takes were a very few which required some little action to be done exactly right.

And you know, these directors are right. If you are going to make a shot which depends very precisely on what you decide to turn the camera on at a certain instant, there is absolutely no reason for quitting until you've got it exactly right. I believe I can do takes as long as the camera can shoot them. It is one of the qualifications of a professional film actor. Granted, you meet the end of your abilities at some point. But I think that will be apparent to everyone, and any perceptive director will either say 'maybe I'm on the edge of the subconscious' and try to drive you beyond it to see if there's something in the area of frenzy, or he will stop at that point.

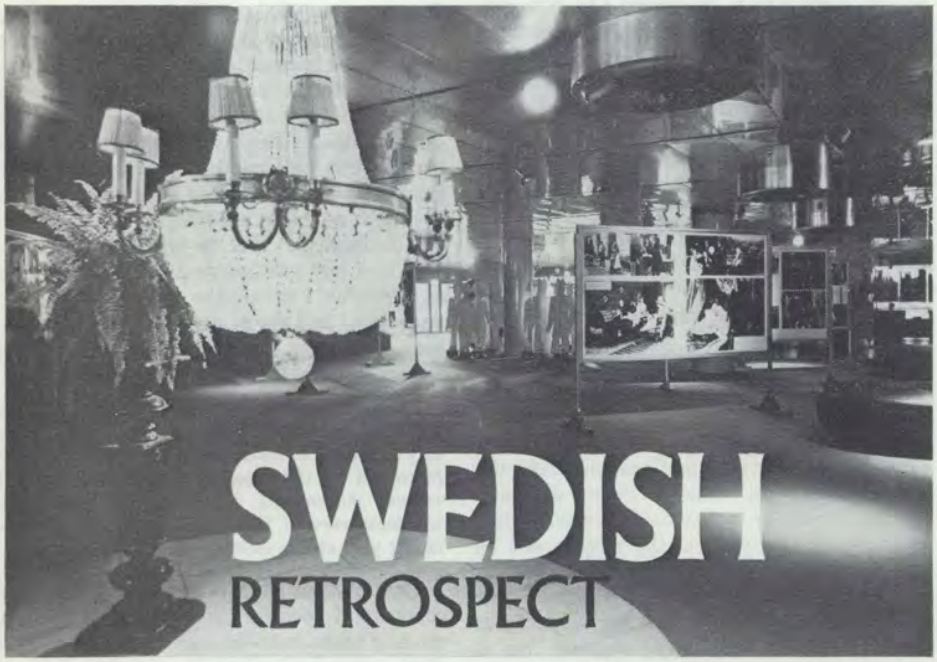
In your career you have nearly always worked with directors who are cinematically your contemporaries. I suppose Minnelli is the major exception, and of course Antonioni, but then he is a very modern sort of film-maker. Is this something you chose deliberately?

Sort of. But then not many of the older directors I respect and would like to have worked with ever asked me. The problem is that once you reach a certain point of eminence and experience you lose touch with who the new actors are. Mike Nichols has often chastised Buck Henry, who was an old friend of mine, for not bringing me to his attention when he was casting *Catch 22*. Immediately after that he was one of the first people to see *Easy Rider*, and that made him aware of me, and he cast me in *Carnal Knowledge*. Mike is older than I am, but in cinema terms he's my contemporary—I've actually been working a long time in films. I'd like to work with anyone whose work seems to me to have some validity in its own terms, and that has to be true of anyone who can survive long enough in this business to be regarded as an old hand. That's why I want to work with Ken Russell, though I'll only be doing a few days on *Tommy*, as the Doctor. Russell's films intrigue me, some I like very much, some I don't like at all, and I want to find out what makes him tick.

And I like working with new people, young people. One thing that interests me is that I must be coming to the point where I shall find myself working with someone who would be considered obviously younger than me. That's something I'm looking forward to with an odd trepidation—because, you know, I feel their contour already . . . ■

'The Passenger'

Walking up the ramp-like entrance to the huge and splendid Film House in Stockholm earlier this year, one was greeted by two enormous cut-out figures of Victor Sjöström and Mauritz Stiller, subjects of an exhibition and film retrospective organised by the Swedish Film Institute. In the foyer were more cut-outs of actors, a dozen stands of blown-up stills, and on the walls a parade of posters and more stills—a strip showing the fire from *Gösta Berling's Saga*, and Sjöström braving the elements in his own *Terje Vigen* (near the entrance was a large production still showing Sjöström about to be doused from a bucket held by an off-camera assistant). Moving round the stands, I was struck by the pin-sharp quality of the images and by an all-embracing response to nature and landscape—all those long shots of rivers and mountains with the human figures dwarfed below, the country rituals, the little houses with their gaily decorated walls. And of course the faces, heavy with some dark passion or weathered by the elements, a parade of monks on one side, on another a deep-toned interior with a menacing figure framed in a doorway. Places and faces looming out from over half a century ago, which would still take pride of place in any modern photographic display.



SWEDISH RETROSPECT

Foyer of Film House during the exhibition

John Gillett

Tucked away in a corner was the exhibition's *pièce de résistance*: a little magic lantern theatre showing stills (taken from the original glass negatives) of Sjöström and Stiller's forty-odd lost films—mainly from 1912–15—arranged in narrative order so that one had a sense of the plot unfolding. Clearly, both directors' visual sense was acute from the start, with beautifully clear textures and depth of focus. Sjöström's *Strike* had groupings round factory machines and street locations which might have come from some modern TV documentary; and Stiller's top-hatted gentlemen and *soignée* ladies showed how, at this early date, he was already moving towards a world of Lubitsch-like social satire which was to find its full expression in the 1920 *Erotikon*.

As I talked to Anna-Lena Wibom (who had arranged the exhibition and film shows), in walked Ingmar Bergman. He was in an expansive mood, talking excitedly about his new stage production of Strindberg's *To Damascus* and seeming slightly bemused about the prospect of his film version of *The Merry Widow* with Barbra Streisand. 'They keep phoning me, but I doubt whether I'll start before September—I like a good period of preparation.' Apparently he was a regular visitor to the Sjöström/Stiller series, catching up on the rarer films. 'My father used to show some films in his church after communion, and I also got to know them when I went to Svensk Filmindustri thirty years ago—they had a lot of nitrate prints in their vaults and I used to run them.'

In assessing the films I saw (in Swedish Institute cinemas appropriately named 'Victor' and 'Mauritz'), I shall omit the standard classics of both directors—such as *Gösta Berling's Saga*, *Herr Arne's Treasure* and *The Phantom Carriage*—since in many ways they represent the heavily weighted literary tradition of the Swedish cinema (in the many adaptations from Selma Lagerlöf's works, for instance); or, in the case of *Vem Dömer?* (1922), a cloying religiosity which is only partly dispelled by the marvellously rich imagery of church interiors and the heroine's final ordeal by fire. On the whole, I prefer the lighter pieces; nothing, however, quite equalled the pleasure of a first-night double bill of Sjöström's *His Grace's Last Testament* and *Cloisters of Sendomir*.

His Grace's Last Testament (1919) has one of Sjöström's finest openings. A long shot of a prosperous looking mansion in the early morning sun; pan down to a dirty vagrant sleeping outside the gates; cut to pigs nuzzling nearby; then into a kitchen interior with servants sprawled over chairs and tables; and finally into the Duke's ornate bedchamber, with the irascible old man (Karl Mantzius) being served breakfast by a long-suffering manservant. Sjöström's acute sense of comedy pacing is complemented by the controlled acting style, with the Duke gleefully deflating his stuffy relations, delivering a pompous speech to a courtyard full of obsequious, bored peasants, and generally refusing to lie down and die.

The sense of place and geography (one gets to know each precisely decorated room in the house) is also a strong feature of *Cloisters of Sendomir* (1920), an occasionally turgid period drama of elderly husband/young wife jealousies (that favourite theme of the time), transformed by Sjöström into a symphony of menacing light and shade. The spectacular lighting effects include a long sequence where the agitated husband snuffs out all the candles and falls asleep in the darkness, only to be awakened by the coming of dawn; and dark-coated figures are always appearing and disappearing through little doors and corridors, almost in the manner of *Blanche*. The bewitching Tora Teje makes an almost Jacobean heroine of the adulterous wife, flitting round rooms and glancing furtively into mirrors, or sitting motionless and all in white as she schemes to explain away her lover's presence.

Only a few years before, in 1913, Sjöström had made what is probably the first full-length 'realist' film, *Ingeborg Holm*, which traces the sad life of a widowed and bankrupt woman forced to farm out her children to foster-parents. From what is basically a Griffith subject, Sjöström sieves away the hand-wringing and calculated pleas for sympathy and offers a series of Mayhew-like tableaux, shot in grey, hard lighting with mainly naturalistic acting, real locations and an only partially happy ending to lighten the gloom. The partings and reunions with the children are sketched in with a few deft strokes, and the mother's increasing distress and humiliation is symbolised in one long-held shot of a madhouse, full of hysterical, contorted figures, which must have made an extraordinary impact at the time.

Apart from playing in his own films, Sjöström also appeared in Stiller's most celebrated early comedies, *Thomas Graal's Best Film* (1917) and *Best Child* (1918), which predate the mainstream of American social satire by several years (it's a fair guess that Lubitsch must have seen them). Sjöström makes a likeable if slightly heavy foil to Karin Molander's delightfully kooky wife; and in *Best Film* we have an early example of flashback within flashback, and a witty use of subtitles counterpointed by images which totally reverse their meaning.

Stiller seems to have developed a dual personality in these years, the knowing, man-about-town tone of the satires contrasting with a pantheistic nature worship even more intense than Sjöström's. In the films of the 1920s he seems particularly drawn to the wilder elements: turbulent

seas in *Johan* (1921) and *The Song of the Blood-red Flower* (1919), icy snows in *Herr Arne's Treasure* (1919) and *Gunnar Hede's Saga* (1923). *Johan* (tinted in light orange in this print) begins with a cascading explosion as a river is dynamited for a dam; then, following an erotic build-up of emotion, the lonely wife and her handsome seducer set off down river in a rowing boat, and Stiller constructs a vivid, dangerous-looking sequence with the boat bucking wildly as it enters rough water, and the cameraman tenaciously holding on as the little boat tosses in and out of frame. The river is also the main motif of *The Blood-red Flower*, with a lively logging contest and the hero riding a single log down river, a sequence shot in deep focus and sometimes from a great height, and taking in crowds watching on the banks, caught in lucid, almost Fordian groupings.

Perhaps my favourite among the Stiller films was *Gunnar Hede's Saga*. Again the debt to Griffith is revealed, but the film is suffused with Stiller's own brand of poetry: a sunny, country house setting, with a group of travelling circus artists camped nearby, contrasted with the snowy northern wastes where the hero is seriously injured after being hauled across country by a runaway reindeer. Following this virtuoso sequence, full of fast tracking shots, Stiller returns to the countryside where a circus girl gradually restores the hero's mind and memory by her violin playing. And how subtly Stiller integrates the setting with the characters: the mansion courtyard inhabited by the rather dishevelled travelling players, the young man dreaming beside a shimmering river bank, the mother wandering alone through the rooms as the house is auctioned. Then, suddenly, the lyric mood is broken by several hallucinatory sequences, as the girl dreams of a witch's cart drawn by bears and the boy sees animals with monstrous horns as he remembers the reindeer stampede.

Sjöström and Stiller were not innovatory artists in the sense of Griffith or Gance or Stroheim; and they made their share of dull films. But they also evolved their own concepts of intimate acting, at a time when the rest of the world was mainly engaged in theatrical stylisation, and they used locations with a documentarist's eye for detail. Seeing a large group of films in a concentrated three days, I was continually surprised by individual shots or sequences—the dreams of death and retribution, the portraits of communities darkened by religious or sexual conflicts. The 'Scandinavian school' now seems more of an entity than ever.

The Swedish Film Institute has of course a special responsibility for preserving this national heritage. I asked Miss Wibom how the series had been prepared, with its carefully restored prints, most of them outstanding in terms of clarity and texture, four of them printed in colour, and all testifying to the pioneering genius of the brothers Julius and Henrik Jaenzon, who were Stiller and Sjöström's regular cameramen. Having transferred all their Swedish silent nitrate prints on to acetate, the Institute is now making projection prints: this series has been in preparation for almost ten years since they took over the holdings from Svensk Filmindustri. But, as all film archives know, the restoration of silent material involves problems which most commercial laboratories are either unwilling or unable to confront. To solve this difficulty, the Swedes have two technicians working for the Institute who have the expertise to deal with shrunken negatives, damaged sections and so on. The Institute hopes eventually to assemble the complete American works of the two directors, including Sjöström's *The Wind*, *The Scarlet Letter* and *The Tower of Lies*.

Jörn Donner, now director of the Swedish Institute, thinks that the next stage of their restoration programme should concentrate on other unexplored figures like John W. Brunius and Gustaf Molander (who, though born in Finland like Stiller, scripted several early Sjöström and Stiller films, and made his own silent films, as well as Ingrid Bergman's 1930s films and the 1943 version of *Ordet*, in which Sjöström appeared). There is also the mysterious Georg af Klercker, who worked mainly for the Hasselblad company in Gothenburg, making thirty-five films between 1912 and 1918, most of them local comedies and Feuillade-like dramas. I managed to see excerpts from some of Klercker's films, and this first glimpse looked extremely promising.

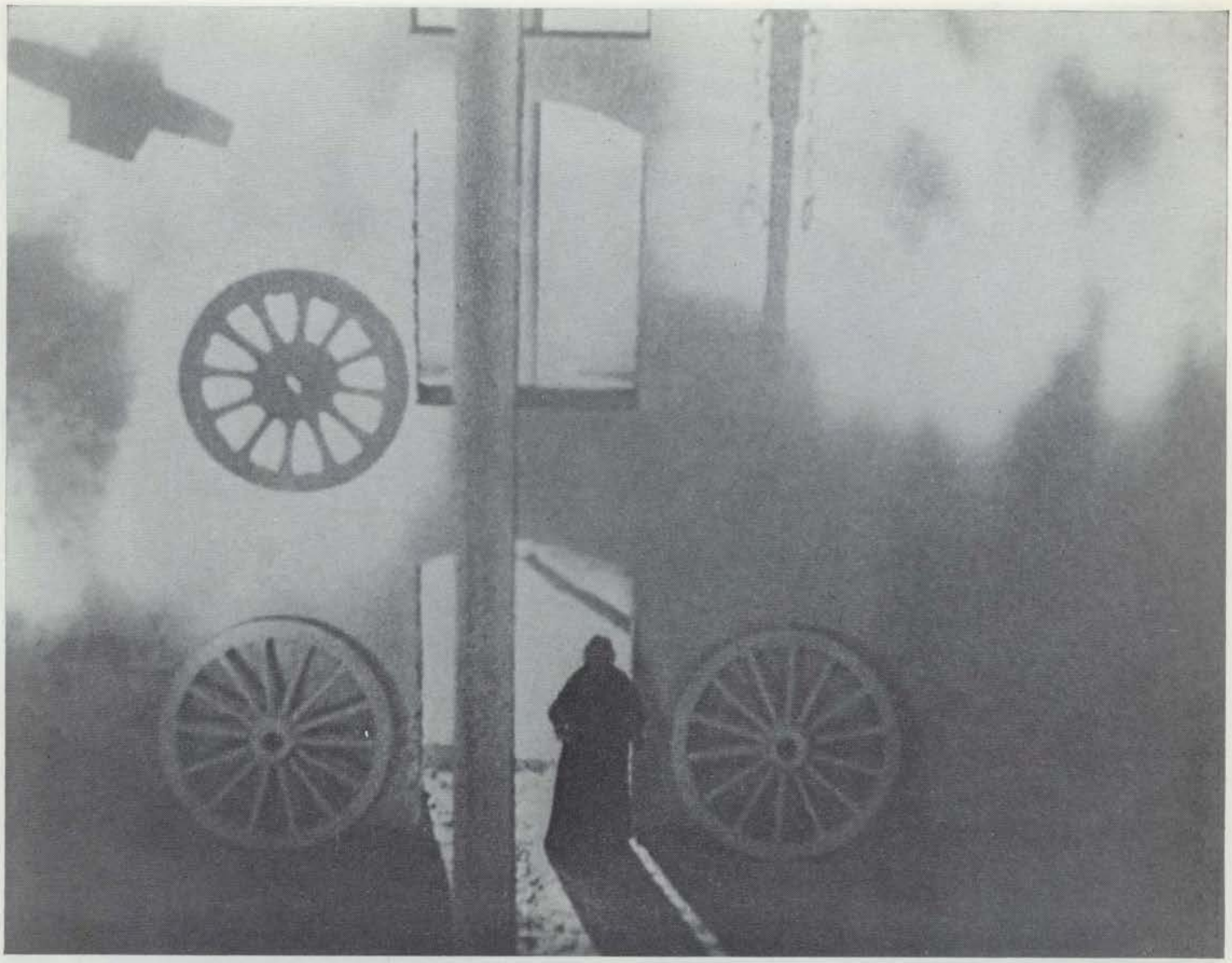
The comedy clips, rather broadly done, were funny but insubstantial, but the thrillers were something else again. *The Mysterious Night of the 25th* (1916) had detective Conny Hoops narrowly escaping an explosion in a deserted shack, nicely timed but edging towards parody in the swift cutting from time bomb ticking away to tense faces and a rescuing car. The excerpt from *The Prisoner of Karlsten's Fortress* (1916) brought us straight back to real Feuillade country, with an amazing opening in Stygian blackness lit only by flashing torches as dark figures move from the castle's dungeons into the light. The heavily textured photography (by Gösta Stäring) was the richest I have seen from the silent period, with scurrying, Langian set-ups as a chase develops on the battlements and down to the rocky shore. Klercker and his technicians apparently invented a new lens system, and it shows. Most startling was a static shot framing the fraught heroine, in silhouette in a window space, with the action caught in deep focus below.

The Swedish Film Institute has sixteen Klercker films in its collection. Slowly but surely, they will be made available and another page of film history will be filled in. Even so, I left slightly sobered by the thought of all those films and all those directors remaining to be sifted and explored—and not only in Sweden. ■

Feuillade country: Georg af Klercker's 'The Prisoner of Karlsten's Fortress' (1916)

Sjöström and Stiller

Top: Karin Molander and Sjöström in Stiller's 'Thomas Graal's Best Child' (1918). Centre: circus gathering outside the country house in Stiller's 'Gunnar Hede's Saga' (1923). Bottom: Hilda Borgström as the mother in Sjöström's 'Ingeborg Holm' (1913). Right: madcap daughter and butler in Sjöström's 'His Grace's Last Testament' (1919)



'*Vampyr*'

CARL DREYER

AND THE THEME OF CHOICE

Carl Dreyer, introducing his film version of Kaj Munk's *Ordet* at the 1955 Edinburgh Festival, quoted Munk's definition of the function of all true art as 'to shock the soul'. Few would deny that this phrase accurately describes Dreyer's own achievement in much, if not all, of his best work.

In one of his rare public comments on his approach to film-making, Dreyer identified his guiding principle as *abstraction*: 'I must at once define abstraction as something that demands of the artist to abstract himself from reality in order to strengthen the spiritual content of his work . . . Abstraction allows the director to get outside the fence with which naturalism has surrounded his medium. It allows his films to be not merely visual, but spiritual.'*

What kind of experiences shock the soul? What manner of abstraction is required for these spiritual experiences to be presented on film? Taking the Christian terms 'soul' and 'spirit' at their given values, I think these are questions which may usefully be kept in mind in any attempt to understand Dreyer.

It is not my intention to offer an exhaustive analysis of Dreyer's films—not all of which I have seen—or to imply that my interpretation precludes others. I wish merely to discuss a preoccupation which seems to me central to his vision and which has not, so far as I know, received attention from previous commentators—a preoccupation with the crisis of choice. To this end, I shall concentrate on three films: *The Parson's Widow* (1920), *The Passion of Joan of Arc* (1928) and *Day of Wrath* (1943).

The Parson's Widow was Dreyer's third film and is generally acknowledged to be his first completely successful one. It amply fulfils his persistent requirement for accuracy and solid realism of sets and props,

*Carl Dreyer: 'Thoughts on My Craft', SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1955/56.

Dai Vaughan

since it was shot in a carefully preserved 'museum village' and all except the principal parts were played by local farmers and farm labourers. Thus the film achieves a 'genre' quality in which people, furniture, animals and landscape all seem to exist on the same plane of reality. On the other hand, it dispenses with all the technical hurly-burly—parallel action, intellectual montage, dynamic masking—which places his previous film, *Leaves from Satan's Book*, in somewhat the same relation to his oeuvre as *Strike* to Eisenstein's. This sweeping aside of the impedimenta of technique not necessary to his purpose may perhaps be viewed as his first move towards 'abstraction'.

The Parson's Widow tells the story of a divinity graduate who enters a preaching competition for which the prize is a country living, where he hopes to settle down and marry his fiancée. He wins the competition only to discover that, by some parish law, he is required to marry the widow of the previous incumbent. He accordingly becomes the fourth husband of the formidable, 77-year-old Dame Margaret. He infiltrates his fiancée into the household under the pretence that she is his sister, and the two make some half-serious efforts to hasten the old lady's end. It is probably the film, rather than the protagonists, which is only half serious at this point. However, the mood becomes progressively more sober until an accident to the fiancée provokes a confrontation in which Dame Margaret, recognising the depth of the lovers' commitment to each other, reveals that she, likewise, had to wait for the death of the previous widow before being able to marry her first husband.

From here a typical synopsis of the film might continue: Dame Margaret takes a last, loving walk around the grounds of her home as if saying farewell to her possessions and her memories, then lies down to surrender herself to death. But this sequence does not have the quality of a coda. It registers more as a climax than does the preceding confrontation. What, after all, is Dame Margaret doing as she walks around the parsonage? She is taking the decision—or perhaps reflecting upon the decision already taken—to die. Certainly it is during this time that we, the audience, begin to suspect her intention.

This sequence is the first significant occasion on which we have been left alone with Dame Margaret. The house and its surroundings, which hitherto we have seen in the light of its lyrical promise of happiness for the young couple, we now see in the light of Dame Margaret's recollections of her similar experience, no longer a promise but a fulfilment. As she sits by the grave of her first husband we are reminded of her line, 'God forgive us, we built our happiness on the hope of the death of another human being.'

Dame Margaret is not senile. There is no suggestion that she dies from weariness or boredom with life or from shock at the discovery that she is an encumbrance to the young lovers. She simply chooses to die: but she makes this choice in a situation in which no known code of morality can be of any guidance; and even if there were such a code, it would have to be chosen from among others. There is, of course, a Christian prohibition against suicide; but the film evades this by allowing Dame Margaret to die—or so it seems—purely by an act of resignation.

It is not a question of selfless sacrifice for others on the part of someone with little more to expect from life. The sequence under discussion makes it quite clear that the world is still rich for Dame Margaret. It is rather a question of sacrificing the beauty of the present in order to validate her memories of the past, for it is these memories which invest the present with its beauty. If a past marriage based on a hoped for death is to remain free of guilt, or to be purged of guilt, or to be forgiven by God, she must follow its logic and die willingly for the benefit of the young people. At this late hour of her life she is faced with a situation where her death is, in a sense, the prerequisite of her previous happiness, since if she chooses not to die she will alter the significance of her own past.

Dame Margaret's final note to the young couple—'Don't forget to hang a horse-shoe over the door, and scatter linseed after me, so that I shall not return to haunt the house and disturb your peace'—indicates total lack of rancour in her willingness to withdraw not only in body but in spirit; and the tracking shot in which the linseed is scattered creates an indescribable feeling that a presence has departed. Dame Margaret has died, not to fulfil a moral obligation, but to define the significance of her own experience—which, moreover, is of significance only to herself. This theme, gently adumbrated in *The Parson's Widow*, was to receive more rigorous and terrible expression in *Joan of Arc*.

'The Parson's Widow': Dame Margaret (Hildur Carlberg)

Dreyer's *Passion of Joan of Arc* is concerned exclusively with the trial and martyrdom; and the crucial moment occurs in the scene leading up to Joan's retraction of her confession of heresy. As she watches a prison guard casually sweeping up the straw crown which has become, for her as for us, the symbol of her torments, she makes the decision which will lead her inevitably to the stake. Just as Dame Margaret chooses between her past love as innocent and her past love as guilty, so Joan, in this scene, makes the final choice between herself as the tool of the Devil and herself as the agent of God.

It is instructive to consider the ways in which this event has been handled by others. Shaw's St. Joan revokes her confession as soon as she discovers that the alternative to the stake is lifelong imprisonment. She is prepared to renounce the glories of warfare, and makes no reference to the 'cause' of France; but she is so committed to the outdoor life of her rural upbringing that she sees the stake simply as the lesser of two evils.

Anouilh's Joan, in his play *The Lark*, has more complex motives. In one sense, she dies to preserve an image of herself: 'What is left of me when I am not Joan any longer?' But the alternatives are presented in curiously static tableaux: herself as a leader among men versus herself as a hanger-on at court, growing fat, having 'nothing to do but eat.' If anything, she is a martyr to female emancipation—to the right of women to play an active role in human affairs. But her choice is not posed in terms which question either the authenticity of her 'voices' or the possible effect of her recantation upon the morale of the French armies (in fact the French king has already indicated to Joan that she is an embarrassment to him). It is not an existential choice, since to persist in her recantation would merely replace one pattern of life with another, and would not invalidate the past one.

Before discussing the meaning of Joan's choice of death in Dreyer's film, we must examine the way the alternatives are defined. The first obvious point, by comparison with Shaw and Anouilh, is the almost total neglect of the political background to the trial. Early in the film there is an incident where Houppeville, having expressed the belief that Joan is a saint, is escorted from the court by English soldiers; but the effect of this is merely to stress that there can be no hope of recourse to compromise, no appeal to the Pope. It is a circular system in which the judges have judged themselves competent to judge, and Joan must either confess to being a heretic or die as one. Similarly, at the end of the film, the crowd is stirred to rebellion by the spectacle of Joan's martyrdom. But this happens after Joan is dead (so that from one point of view it may be considered a monstrous irony); and there is no implication whatever that an assessment of the possible consequences of martyrdom played any part in her decision. The sequence simply confirms our conviction that Joan's choice was honourable by reminding us that the way we resolve our innermost doubts does have consequences in the real world, and that these consequences may be neither foreseen by us nor ever known to us.

Another element which tends to insulate Dreyer's Joan from the complexities of events outside the courtroom is the hinted parallelism with the story of Christ, a story familiar in outlines worn smooth by repetition. This parallelism is suggested not only in the film's title—The *Passion* of Joan of Arc—but by the crown of straw, resembling the crown of thorns, with which the soldiers mock her, placing an arrow in her hand and genuflecting before her; by her being spat upon by a judge; by her being garbed in a special robe before execution; and by the sign over her stake which bears four initials signifying, 'Heretic, Relapsed, Apostate, Idolatress', and which inevitably recalls the 'I.N.R.I.' over the cross.

Joan of Arc is commonly considered an extreme example of Dreyer's technique of 'abstraction', in the simple solidity of its sets and its isolation of the human face against bare backgrounds. Certainly the

costumes, whilst not appearing anachronistic, seem to place the action outside any specific historical period, so that few people even notice that one of the priests is wearing a modern pair of spectacles. But it seems to me that the technique, rather than being a purely cinematic imposition, is the outward expression of a more fundamental abstraction in which the circumstantial elements of the story are eliminated until we are left, not with a spurious symbolism, but with the human essence of the drama.

Not only does the film dispense with discussion of politics and patriotism: it dispenses with real discussion altogether. For example, Joan offers no practical reasons for her persistence in wearing men's dress; and she exhibits none of that argumentativeness which, in both Shaw and Anouilh, allows her to resemble a pert theology student trying to flummox the vicar. Nor is this a mere consequence of the differences between cinema and theatre, for the trial occupies more time in the film than in either of the plays, and the film finds room for a good deal of spoken material. But what is being said? 'How can you be sure that your voices come from God?' 'How can you be sure that my voices come from the Devil?' The simple truth is that these two perfectly reasonable questions exhaust the matter; and they are reiterated in one form and another throughout the film, with an implacable cross-cutting of faces and title cards as intransigent as if they had been carved in granite. What Joan is saying is, 'I deem my voices to be more holy than your scholarship' (though she would never have phrased it this way, since in the fifteenth century, even more than now, it was obligatory to disguise one's own judgment as acquiescence in that of others). To describe this as a conflict between good and evil is to say nothing.

Much has been made, and with justice, of the unique power of Falconetti's performance in the title role. However, the acting in this film is more a receptacle for the dialogue than an expression of it. One is frequently reminded of the famous experiment in which Lev Kuleshov is said to have imparted the emotions of hunger, joy and grief to an impassive face by intercutting with it shots of food, a baby and a coffin. For example, there is a scene in which Joan is being given a final opportunity to sign her confession before being put to torture. Cauchon stresses the infinite mercy of the Church. For a number of successive shots Joan wears an almost unchanging expression into which we read a succession of meanings. It is perhaps a look of gratitude and incredulity, as of a child who has just been offered something or has just comprehended something. Perhaps she will accept this last benevolence. Cauchon pauses, but Joan makes no reply. He becomes perplexed. That fixed half-smile, that stare at no one: has she perhaps lost touch, lost her grasp of reality? He becomes impatient and speaks to her again, a warning. That smile: is it also the smile of hysteria, of one who reacts in a way opposite to that which the circumstances justify: the smile at the news of a friend's death when we find the bearer's concern comical? He becomes angry at her continued obduracy in the face of her fear: 'You will stand alone . . . Alone.' Joan replies at last: 'Yes, alone with God.' Her smile was all of these things: the ultimate fear; the reversed reaction in pity for her judges; loss of touch with their reality; gratitude, not for their mercy, but for her own obstinacy; faith in her vision of God. None of this would be possible if the acting were poor or inadequate. But the point is—and here lies the true contrast with theatre—that our comprehension of the acting is itself the means by which we structure her situation in our own minds.

The style of this film, with its obsessive use of close-up and its wilfully inconsecutive editing, has disturbed a good many critics. Even Tom Milne, in his perceptive and loving study of Dreyer,* confesses to some bafflement and comes close to saying, 'the technique does not work, yet somehow it does.' If we bear in mind that the close-up in cinema is traditionally used to signal a climax of human confrontation and emotion, then surely the key to its use in *Joan of Arc* is that this film is, from the posing of the first question to the final withdrawal of the recantation, one continuous crisis of confrontation in which the emotional pitch scarcely varies because the terms of reference do not change. It is as if a moment of choice had been placed under a microscope so that all its minute fluctuations might be observed.

Beyond their traditional import, these close-ups, disjointed, exaggerated and sliding perversely in and out of frame, call to mind two distinct areas of experience. The first is that sense of partial hypnosis which can be brought about by concentration upon an accuser, whose power seems to override normal social conventions governing the meeting of eyes. (I have a personal recollection of a sadistic schoolmaster—his subject was religion—who forbade us, on pain of corporal punishment, to remove our gaze from him for one moment during his lessons. As a result, his face used to swim before my eyes like a monstrous balloon pulsating in a dimensionless space.) The second is that feeling, which can overtake us when the habitual course of our lives is disrupted, that everyday objects have shed the complexities of their familiar associations. (A clear if trivial example of this in literature occurs in Huxley's *Point Counter Point*, where a callow young communist has agreed, from bravado, to assist in the murder of a fascist leader. When the deed is done he is terrified; and as he waits for darkness to fall, so that the body can be removed from the house, he tries to find distraction in a copy of *Vogue*. The flat, monotonous, repetitive manner in which the illustrations are described conveys precisely this feeling of dislocation from the significance of ordinary things.) These two experiences are not similar; but both deform the co-ordinates of normality—the first spatial, the second temporal—and both relate exactly to the situation of Dreyer's Joan.

What, then, are we given in this distended moment of choice? It can hardly be in any normal sense a progression of human drama, for human drama acts along the co-ordinate of time. What we are given is a sharp delineation of the limits within which Joan's choice must be made. We are shown the depths of her humiliation and her terror of physical suffering. We are given an opportunity to understand the things which matter to her. When the hearing is adjourned and continued outdoors in the graveyard, a few shots of birds and flowers perform, starkly, the function of Dame Margaret's last walk around the parsonage; and a shot of a steeple which is obscured by a skull thrown out of a grave expresses eloquently, in this setting, Joan's fear of dying excommunicate from her beloved Church. We are shown the range of feeling among the tribunal, from cruelty through paternalism to love, and are led to recognise that, in Joan's situation, the feelings of her judges can make no difference; for even the most treacherous of her accusers is aiming

'The Passion of Joan of Arc': Falconetti with the crown of straw

*Tom Milne: *The Cinema of Carl Dreyer* (Zwemmer, 1971).

for a confession which will keep her out of the hands of the executioner. Finally, when we become irritated with the repetition by both parties of their dogmatic assertions, we are left with the recognition that Joan's problem cannot be resolved by argument.

Let us now ask the question: what exactly is Joan doing in the scene where she resolves to retract her recantation, and where she makes her final decision between the alternatives—of repudiating the voices which she believes to come from God or of accepting excommunication from the Church which, equally, she believes to represent God's will on earth? She is not exercising moral judgment, since it is between two mutually exclusive criteria of moral judgment that she must decide. She is not deliberating, since deliberation is the attempt to define what one is (or wants) and to act accordingly, whereas Joan can define what she is (and has been) only by the action she is now called upon to take. She is moved to her retraction not by an image of her triumphs at arms, nor of the world she loves, but of her suffering; and by the implication that it has been meaningless.

'The Passion of Joan of Arc'

We in the audience, unless we are Christians, will have no prior views about the provenance of Joan's 'voices'; and the film has purported to offer no evidence. Neither have we been given any information on which to assess the justice of her political ends. But we do know that only by dying for her cause and her convictions can Joan constitute these as having been worth dying for.

One final comment on *Joan of Arc*. It is frequently asserted that all of Joan's 'tormentors', with the obvious exceptions of Massieu and Ladvenu, are portrayed as uniformly 'evil'. This is certainly not how it comes across to me. The desperation with which Cauchon urges Joan to recant seems to echo a measure of her own anguish, until it almost seems as if his own faith were undergoing trial. He emerges as a humane man who has no wish to consign an ignorant girl to the stake merely for her pig-headedness. (Dreyer refers only fleetingly to the technical distinction whereby Joan was not burned by the Church as a heretic but was excommunicated as a heretic and then, deprived of the Church's protection, burned by the civil authorities as a witch.) But Cauchon cannot entertain Joan's point of view without doubting the authority of the Church as vested in himself; and, since his humanity knows no other ground than his religion, he faces a dilemma which he can evade only by forcing Joan into a confession at all costs. It is his tragedy, rather than hers, that he should fail.

Before passing on to *Day of Wrath*, which also inhabits a world of burnings and bigotry, we should perhaps pause to consider the reasons for the prevalence in contemporary art of themes drawn from the murkier side of the mediaeval and Reformation periods. (The Victorians, of course, were much concerned with the Middle Ages; but to them it was a period of idyllic pleasures and equally idyllic hardships, a period of high craftsmanship unsullied by *Usura*. Did they ever match, for example, the sense of blind menace which pervades even such a minor work as Cocteau's *Bacchus*?). Almost every Dreyer commentator feels impelled to address himself to this question, not because he prides himself as a social historian, but because his answers to it are inextricably bound up with his response to Dreyer's films and therefore constitute an interest which it would seem secretive not to declare. Thus Boerge Trolle* advances a theory which identifies life and death as female and male principles, and then proceeds to equate these with democracy and dictatorship—all of which I find extremely far-fetched; whilst Tom Milne's cautious remarks about the persistence of the primitive passions in our world of glass and concrete seem to explain less than they should.

*Boerge Trolle: 'The World of Carl Dreyer', SIGHT AND SOUND, Winter 1955/56.

It is difficult to state with certainty that the practice of torture has increased in our lifetimes, rather than that improved communications have enhanced our awareness of it. But there are distinctions to be drawn—socially, not morally—between torture practised by the sadist whose office provides him with the opportunity, torture practised for the eliciting of specific information and torture practised as an official instrument of policy against those who dissent from the opinions of the torturers; and there seems little doubt that this last category has seen continuous growth throughout the middle half of the twentieth century. The purpose of the concentration camps was not just to exterminate but to defile. As people have, with tautologous justification, lost faith in the perfectibility of man through reason and science, the world has fallen increasingly under the sway of such movements as fascism, doctrinaire communism and doctrinaire liberalism which, lacking the authority of consent and unable to appeal to argument, turn to defilement as their only reply to opposition. It is the logic of dogma. And there is an ironical feedback to this process: for whilst the decline of religion, and the emergence of a rational and scientific outlook, has brought about a degree of humanity, sympathy and mutual respect unprecedented in history, the material successes of science have placed an equally unprecedented technology at the service of dogma—at the service, that is, of those institutions with the most to fear from free thought. Dreyer's films are sometimes accused of portraying the human situation in unnecessarily extreme terms. But I doubt whether anyone who has tried to live with minimal human decency under an authoritarian government would think so.

Day of Wrath was made under the Nazi occupation. Its concern is not simply with one person's crisis of choice but with the way in which two people's choices interact with one another. The film is set in the seventeenth century and opens with the pursuit of an old lady, Herlof's Marte, whom we shall shortly see burned as a witch. The function of this is twofold. On the one hand, the horror of the burning will pervade the subsequent action and will stamp at its true value every hint and murmur of the suspicion of witchcraft. On the other hand, since Herlof's Marte is a virtually a-religious woman, who does not care if her herbs were plucked from under the gallows, as those are the ones that do you good, her burning is a sure indication that this sort of rationalism will have no place in the world we are about to enter; and in this sense it parallels the Houppeville incident in *Joan of Arc*. Here is a world in which terror is wielded by sensitive, right-minded citizens. There is no caricature of the pious witch-hunters, though there is hideous irony in the wording of the documents: '. . . safely burned, to the greater glory of God.'

Absalon, the pastor who supervises the execution of Herlof's Marte, shares the vicarage with his stern mother and with his young wife, Anne. We learn that, in order to marry Anne, Absalon has concealed his knowledge that her own mother was a witch; and one of the film's latent conflicts is indicated in an early scene where Absalon's mother tells him: 'The day may come when

you must choose . . . between God and Anne.' Absalon's dilemma is crisply stated by Tom Milne: '. . . if he is honest with himself, he either condemned Anne's mother to eternal damnation as a heretic, or he condemned the innocent Marte to agony in the flames for no reason at all.'

Absalon has never asked himself, or Anne, whether she loved him. At one key point in the film she makes a desperate attempt to reciprocate his supposed passion, but by now it is too late: his recently awakened knowledge of his own guilt inhibits him from responding to her erotic advances.

The final strand in this complex web is supplied by Martin, Absalon's son by a previous marriage, who returns from a long absence to be confronted with his new 'mother'. Martin and Anne fall in love; and this process is subtly linked with Anne's growing suspicion that she has inherited her mother's powers of sorcery. She is therefore unable to distinguish clearly—nor, indeed, has she any grounds upon which to do so—between normal human emotion and the exercise of the black arts.

'Day of Wrath': Absalon (Thorkild Roose)

It is sometimes said, apropos this film, that it is far from obvious whether Dreyer himself believed in witchcraft. The question, of course, is not whether Dreyer personally believed in it but whether the film can take on significance only in the light of such belief. And this is not so. What matters here is that the characters in the film believe firmly in witchcraft; and this belief, like their religious outlook and their erotic impulses, provides the context within which the significance of their actions must be read. Furthermore, the action is so finely balanced between the supernatural and the coincidental that it yields the same significance whether we believe in witchcraft or not. Whilst *Joan of Arc* might prove boring to dogmatic Christians, I doubt whether *Day of Wrath* would prove boring to witches.

Anne explicitly wills the death of Absalon; and, when she faces him brutally with her love for Martin, he dies—perhaps from shock, perhaps from witchcraft, perhaps simply from missing his footing on the stairs. The question of our guilt for a death which we have desired and have perhaps brought about, but have none the less not intentionally caused, is not an unfamiliar one. It occurs, for example, in Sjöström's film *Love's Crucible* and in Strindberg's play *There are Crimes and Crimes*. But it is usually argued out in moral terms, with ultimate redemption being found in love, secular or divine, when the moral argument has been pushed to exhaustion. For Anne, however, it is a question of self-definition: of whether or not to acknowledge herself as a witch. Proctor, the hero of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible* (filmed as *The Witches of Salem* from a script by Sartre) touches upon the theme of self-definition when he doubts whether he has the goodness to deserve martyrdom; but throughout his subsequent confession there is no feeling that he has truly accepted a view of himself in terms laid down by others. This is precisely what Anne will do.

In private, over the body of Absalon, Anne assures Martin that she was not responsible for his death. She evades the direct question, 'Did you have the *power* to wish him dead?' since she can attribute to herself that power only through an acceptance of the responsibility; and 'responsibility' in this context covers wider implications than that of witchcraft: thus her answer, though evasive, is more complete. Her line, 'I believe that he died for our sake,' draws attention to a strange mirroring of the triangular situation in *The Parson's Widow*—marriage to an older person proving an impediment to young love. In view of the vehemence of the verbal assault with which Anne precipitated Absalon's death, this remark of hers is somewhat surprising. But if it is not to be dismissed as insincere, it can only be taken to express the belief that Absalon's soul was broken by the ultimate revelation of its own contradictions—the flouting of God's law for the sake of a carnal love which was not true carnal love since it was not reciprocal—and the implied recognition that only the love of Anne and Martin could give such meaning to his past action as to allay his guilt.

Martin accepts Anne's assurance, and pledges himself to 'stand beside' her if she is accused by his grandmother of responsibility for Absalon's death. Yet when this accusation is made, in public, on the formal occasion of Absalon's funeral, Martin moves from Anne's side into the protecting presence of the grandmother. His 'position' has been changed by the mere articulation of the words 'witch' and 'Evil One'. He has heard his love for Anne denounced as the work of diabolism; and he has allowed his interpretation of events, even of his own emotions, to be subsumed into an interpretation furnished by others. Anne, robbed of the love which gave meaning to her belief in her innocence, confesses to having killed Absalon and lured Martin by witchcraft. Once again, as with *Joan of Arc*, the alternatives are absolute. Martin has not only abandoned Anne, but has by the same choice abandoned all basis for the recognition that, had he kept faith with her, she would have denied any traffic with the Devil; that she would, in either outcome, have been telling the truth; and that he, and perhaps even his grandmother, would have accepted her testimony. As it is, Martin will go through life believing that Anne's confession has vindicated his betrayal of her.

Day of Wrath is a film about love—love not merely as erotic attraction between two people but as that commitment of faith without which it can never be more than the concurrence of transient emotions. Here again we have a situation where our present actions alter the significance of our past, since faith once broken has never been faith at all. Martin's betrayal of Anne precipitates Anne's betrayal of herself. When Martin consents to see himself through his grandmother's eyes, Anne consents to see herself through his eyes. Her previous oath has now become a sacrilege and a perjury. But it is scarcely sufficient to explain this by saying that Martin's betrayal has robbed her of the will to live. One does not, I imagine, face death by burning so lightly. Martin's betrayal makes Anne believe she is a witch.

Anne's hesitant, private oath of innocence to Martin may be read to imply: 'I may have desired Absalon's death, and I may have caused it, but I did not desire to cause it. I spoke only in the hatred which he aroused in me by standing in the way of our love. If he died by my conscious agency, it can only have been with the aid of the Evil One; and I will not accept that my love for you is evil.' But with Martin's betrayal the terms of the alternatives have changed. It is no longer a question of setting a moral value upon their love, since it no longer exists and therefore never existed. The conflict can no longer be posed in terms of good or evil, witch or non-witch, since it is the validity of such concepts which Anne is now called upon to judge: 'Am I a witch? What is a witch? I think I have the power. But I have no proof. Was Absalon's death the proof? I did not consciously cause

it. But does consciousness affect the issue if I have the power of calling upon supernatural aid? This old woman says I am a witch. Does she know more than I do? I know no more than she does. Am I a witch? What is a witch? Shall I constitute the definition—and with it that of evil—in such a way as to include myself? Can I believe that my impulses were evil? They did not seem so to me. But what if I am inherently evil? Can I judge the presence of evil in my own judgments? But can the old woman judge it better than I? She has no secret evidence. Am I a witch?' From the grandmother's standpoint, witches know they are witches; but, at the end of all this, Anne is no closer to a resolution. And it is because her choice must be without basis that Anne, clinging to the wreckage of her illusions, submits herself to Martin's definition. If Martin's pledge of support had been given freely, why should he now abjure it? But to see this as evidence for satanic intervention is to credit Martin with precisely that good faith which he has called into doubt.

I am not for one moment suggesting that these arguments are thoughts which we should attribute to Anne or see as 'passing through her mind' while she stands poised over Absalon's body, challenged to swear to her innocence. They are merely one of the ways in which the structure of her situation might be verbalised. If, as with *Joan of Arc*, the instant of decision were to be stretched along the time-axis, this is how the drama might unfold.

It is characteristic of absolute choice that it can be expressed in few words or many, since it is beyond words, and arguments choose themselves. (Walter Lowrie, in his introduction to Vol. II of Kierkegaard's *Either/Or*, remarked that the title was, in a sense, more important than the book.) And it is a characteristic of the film medium that it can present us with the moment of choice in its concrete particularity, free of the verbal exposition which theatre or the novel require, showing no more, if it wishes, than would be manifest in life. This is a characteristic which precedes such considerations as whether or not a given technique is truly 'cinematic'; and it is in seizing upon this quality and its congruence with his purposes that Dreyer's 'abstraction' finds its truest expression. It is for this reason that I have devoted little attention to Dreyer's technique (which has in any case been amply and well analysed by others). Since technique in Dreyer serves primarily to intensify our involvement in the reality of the situations, I have felt able to take it on trust.

I am well aware that my interpretations of these films differ, in minor but perhaps significant respects, from those suggested by Dreyer himself in his published screenplays.* These screenplays, which give details not only of dialogue and action but also of the feelings which the actors and camera-work are required to express, offer little support to my view of Cauchon, for example. And of the scene between Anne and Absalon Dreyer explicitly states, 'He feels the ageing man's unease over the ardour which he cannot reciprocate'; which seems, at least, to imply that his age is the barrier. Of this there are three things to be said. First, as a matter of principle, an artist enjoys no special privilege in the interpretation of his own work (though he is obviously well placed to suggest possibilities). Secondly, these screenplays were written before the shooting, and represent only steps on the road to the finished films. And thirdly, a director's intentions are not the sole factor involved in the shaping of a film. The actors, the technicians and happenstance all make their contribution.

If we are to take these films seriously as projections of the human situation, and not as pre-determined puppet-shows strung by God, we may legitimately ask what would have happened if Absalon had responded to Anne's passion, born of desperation though it may have been. Would it have been in character for him to do so? Or rather—since all psychological explanations are explanations after the event—would it have seemed out of character if he had done so; or would he simply have defined himself in a new character? He must recently have been attracted to her to have perjured his soul for her. He does not look too old. By responding to her now he would shed at least one half of his burden of guilt, and might attempt to atone to Herlof's Marte through his love for Anne. His situation has all the elements which, by acting differently, he would have construed as his motives. Anne, for her part, might have found fulfilment in his love; in which case her dawning love for Martin would have taken on, in hindsight, the character of a fleeting infatuation.

The prevalence of women as central characters in Dreyer's work has frequently been remarked. In this we may see a further expression of his principle of abstraction. Since women have, until recently, been permitted to play little direct part in the affairs of the world, they are subject to fewer of the formalised codes of conduct which, for a man, can govern his choice—or enable him to evade it by acting 'in character'—in almost any conceivable situation. Such an idea is frequently employed in comedy, and its comprehension by the audience relied upon, where a husband, standing on his dignity, is embarrassed by his wife's refusal to obey the unwritten rules. This, at any rate, seems to offer a more helpful explanation than the appeal to some 'eternal' feminine principle by those who seek in psychological theory merely the excuse to replace one demonology by another.

The three films already discussed reveal in its sharpest form what I would identify as Dreyer's central preoccupation. This preoccupation is not uniformly in evidence throughout his work. There is little trace of it, for example, in the delightful *Bride of Glomdale*. Like most people, Dreyer is interested in more than one facet of life. But it would savour of abdication if I were not to indicate briefly the degree to which it seems to inform some of his other films.

'Day of Wrath': Herlof's Marte (Anne Svierkier)

I have not seen Dreyer's first film, *The President*; but it is said to contain a scene in which a judge is required to choose between the values on which his career has been founded and his human responsibilities to his illegitimate daughter, whilst at the same moment a statue of him is being unveiled in honour of his eminence. On the face of it, the statue would seem a cogent symbol of the idea that the judge has been cast, by himself and others reciprocally, in a 'mould' from which it is difficult for him to break free.

A similar symbolism is represented in *Gertrud*, Dreyer's last film, by the mirrors which the central character receives as presents from her lovers. To give someone a mirror is to ask her to view herself, not in the light of her potential, but as a mere actuality—to reflect upon her image as

*Carl Theodor Dreyer: *Four Screenplays*, translated by Oliver Stallybrass (Thames and Hudson, 1970). This contains the screenplays of *Joan of Arc*, *Vampyr*, *Day of Wrath* and *Ordet*.

'Vampyr': '. . . a landscape of that gap between choices when we have no personality at all'

perceived by the lover. Women characteristically use mirrors to apply make-up—to freeze themselves into the stasis of an icon. (Tom Milne makes what appears to be the same point about mirrors, but sums it up, surprisingly, by saying that in *Gertrud* the mirrors 'also mean life because they make time stand still.' He is speaking in contrast to Cocteau's observation that mirrors show our ageing and bring us closer to death. But surely it is life, in any meaningful sense, which brings us closer to death. Time standing still *is* death.) The dialogue of *Gertrud* is packed with references to freedom and to choice. It is a film which seems concerned to make statements, verbal and visual. But it does so in a style more appropriate to Dreyer's normal practice of 'revealing' situations. There may be a level of response on which this apparent conflict can be reconciled; but I have not found it.

Other than *Gertrud*, the Dreyer film on which critical opinion most diverges is *Vampyr*, where the whole framework of a girl's personality is steadily undermined by an outside and malevolent influence. The film is performed and photographed in a pale, limp style the effect of which is not so much to shroud events in mystery—which is relatively easy—as to drain them of significance. We feel no sense of incongruity when the girl who has suffered a vampire attack is given a blood transfusion. It is almost as if the film-makers themselves were in the grip of vampirism and were viewing the world through the protracted lassitude of Carmilla, Sheridan le Fanu's eponymous lady on whose story the film was distantly based. It may or may not be fanciful to see in this film, with its elusive similarities to *Joan of Arc*, a magnification of time to a higher power—a landscape of that gap between choices when we have no personality at all. There is an old conundrum which goes: 'A man came to a river and jumped across it. Before he jumped he was on the bank. After he had jumped he was in the air. Where was he when he jumped?' When he jumped he was in the world of *Vampyr*.

But if time is stretched to zero in *Vampyr*, the reverse is true of the early *Leaves from Satan's Book*, where four very complicated stories are shoe-horned into one film. Two of these stories—the ones concerning the Inquisition and the French Revolution—are positively riddled with moments of crisis and betrayal; and, in terms of pure plot, they alone could support pages of analysis. But the analysis would not bear upon the film. The events pile up so quickly that the viewer has no chance to live out the conflicts through his own involvement, and the result rarely rises above the level of a brilliantly animated synopsis. In the Judaic episode there is a curious pre-echo of *Joan of Arc* where Satan, in the guise of a Pharisee, says to Judas, 'He is not the Son of God: he is the son of the Devil; and he has bound you with the Devil's magic.' The scene is shot in tight close-up, and there is a genuine perplexity in the acting of Judas which militates against the assumption that he is knowingly choosing evil in preference to good. But the terms of our myths are such that we cannot be morally neutral between Christ and the Devil when the Devil, as a figure within the Christian myth, is corporeally represented on the screen; and our sympathy for Judas is diminished into pity for the fallen. This reservation holds, in lesser degree, for the other episodes. Satan is a difficult character to handle in the context of realism.

The closest Dreyer comes to realism in the sense of what Zavattini called 'everydayness' is in *Master of the House*; and this is a cardinal film for anyone who may suspect that, to Dreyer, painful choices are called for only in the shadow of the stake. It is a simple story about a tyrannical, petit-bourgeois husband who demands perfection of his wife. The wife leaves him, and her place is taken by his old nanny. She performs all the tasks which his wife has performed for his comfort, but does so in such an obtrusive way that she makes his life a misery; and a reconciliation takes place when the husband has learned to see his wife as a fellow human being and not as a robot. This 'conversion', simple to summarise but conveyed through a wealth of accurately observed detail, is totally convincing, and carries something of the shock of a scalpel found in a Christmas cracker. The husband has repudiated a past which he sees to have been based upon a dishonesty—the desire to enjoy his wife's comforts without conceding her humanity as his comforter.

Finally, though I have not seen *Ordet*, I should like to make one small point by a comparison of the published screenplay with Kaj Munk's original. At the very end, after a miracle in which a woman has been raised from the dead by prayer, Dreyer has dropped the line, spoken by a doctor, 'These amateur death-certificates must be done away with'; and he has added the line, spoken by the woman's husband, 'Yes, I have found your faith.' The question has often been mooted, as with the witchcraft theme in *Day of Wrath*, whether this film can take on meaning only within the assumptions of Christian belief. The answer, I suspect from this comparison, is no. What Dreyer appears to have done is to set the action entirely within the *context* of religious belief by abstracting from it those elements which, in the day-to-day world, might hold that belief to question. Munk's ending can be interpreted as an appeal for a Kierkegaardian leap into the 'absurd' of a strictly religious faith. Anyone who wishes to draw this implication from Dreyer's ending should perhaps try raising the indisputably dead.

Dreyer characteristically directs our attention to the anguish of choice by posing the alternatives in terms unacceptable to us, so that our sympathy will not be refracted through our prior commitment (though we may note in passing that he never presents us with those artificially insoluble problems of the poor-man's-existentialism variety in which a character is required, say, to choose between blowing his wife's brains out or allowing twenty children to die of hunger). It may be argued that this is a defect, in that his concern for human authenticity is such as to preclude any concern with what people are to be authentic about. True, he seems to combine a hatred of authority with a distrust of any means by which men might group together to overthrow it. At the end of the French episode in *Leaves from Satan's Book*, Satan gleefully accuses his victim of having betrayed three women, but says nothing of his having betrayed the Revolution into the bargain. On the other hand, it is difficult to see how Dreyer's distinctive merits could have been combined with those he may be said to lack.

It may be said that we have no use for a story which hinges upon a miracle. But there is a sense in which we all believe in miracles. We should never do anything if we believed the world to be frozen in immutability—if we did not have faith in the unforeseeable, in the possibility of change in people, in institutions, in ourselves, change in the very quality of reality, public or private, in the quality of consciousness. By his process of abstraction, Dreyer focuses attention on those moments which reveal our need for, and the demands of, such faith. These are the experiences which shock the soul. ■

TV STRATEGIES AND EUROPEAN FILM PRODUCTION

Vincent Porter

The decline in cinema attendances over the last two decades can be attributed to many factors. There is no doubt, however, that the spread of television ownership has played a major part; and today the future of the cinema as a place of mass entertainment is in jeopardy. As cinema attendances fall, so television viewing figures increase. As a result, TV programming policy begins to play an ever increasing part in the future of a nation's cinemagoing habits and, consequently, in the health of its film production industry.

The Economic System

There are two model economic systems: the market economy and the planned or command economy. Both are systems which determine how limited resources (for film production, capital and talent) may be used to their best advantage. In the case of the market economy, decisions are made in the market-place by the laws of supply and demand. In the command economy, decisions are taken by a central authority—usually the State or one of its agencies.

Films produced for cinemas have normally been made in the context of a market economy, and the growth of Hollywood is one of the classic textbook examples of a market economy at work. Films for television, however, are made within a context which has many of the characteristics of a command economy. Neither of the textbook models can be much more than a guide. On the one hand, the film/cinema economy is dominated by the policies of the American majors and therefore has many of the characteristics of a command economy*; while on the other, there are factors which substantially modify the command nature of the TV economy. Among these are the ownership and programming policy of the rival national networks, the degree to which network finances are dependent on the sale of advertising time, and the extent to which programmes transmitted by neighbouring national networks compete for audiences.

Commercial companies are of course entertainment oriented; and where a state-owned TV network is in competition with a commercial network, there is a clear tendency to move programming policy away from culture and information towards entertainment. Advertising pressures mean that commercial programmers must capture large audiences; state-owned networks (as Table I shows) compete in varying degrees with the programming of their rivals. The competition for audiences does not only affect television viewing figures; it also affects other leisure activities, including cinemagoing. It's well known that in Britain the rate of decline in cinema admissions accelerated significantly with the introduction of commercial TV and the competitive policy then adopted by the BBC.

On television, it is often the old feature films which attract some of the largest audiences; and in a competitive situation, a network frequently has to transmit an old movie to compete with the one being shown by a rival. This happens not only nationally but also internationally. In a small country such as Belgium, where many viewers can receive programmes from neighbouring France, Germany, Holland and Luxembourg, the popularity of feature films can be particularly trying. As Radiodiffusion Télévision Belge noted in its Report for 1971, a noticeable section of the public regularly switches to a foreign station transmitting a film. As the power of the television transmitters increases, this element of foreign competition becomes an increasingly important factor in programming policy.

Programmers like old movies not only because they attract large audiences; they are also cheap to buy. Most TV networks are in the position of monopoly purchaser when buying films from independent or foreign producers, and this situation is reflected in the sale prices for films on television (see Table II). In most countries of the EEC, the purchase price for films reflects a market price of between $50 and $100 per hundred thousand viewers; although in the United Kingdom, where there is a limited degree of competition, and in Luxembourg, which is completely covered by transmissions from neighbouring countries, the price is nearly twice as high.

This monopolistic bargaining position of national TV networks is countered by the co-ordinating efforts of the Motion Picture Export Association of America, which acts as an export cartel for the American majors. At the start of 1973, the purchase price in Italy for feature films was at the lower end of the scale—reflecting the policy of the Italian network, RAI, which limits its screenings of features to two per week, of which one is Italian. Last year, however, RAI was in financial (and political) difficulties. In an illuminating demonstration of its bargaining strength, the MPEA was quick to exploit this weakness. By a judicious mixture of boycotting sales to RAI, tough bargaining and astute public relations, the MPEA within a few months doubled the purchase price of films, from $6,000 to $12,000.

It is the command nature of the TV economy which has enabled European networks to use these low purchase prices for feature films as a cornerstone of their programming strategies. As the stockpile of old movies and TV series declines, and as their purchase prices reflect the constant upward

TABLE I: RATIO OF INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES (1971)

Country/Network	Information	Entertainment
Australia ABC	44%	56%
Australia Commercial	15%	85%
Japan NHK General	67%	33%
Japan Commercial	19%	81%
United Kingdom BBC	46%	54%
United Kingdom ITV	34%	66%
United States Non-Commercial	61%	39%
United States Commercial	16%	84%

Source: Varis, International Inventory of Television Programme Structure and the Flow of TV Programmes Between Nations.

*See, for example, David Gordon's article 'Why the Movie Majors are Major' (SIGHT AND SOUND, Autumn 1973).

TABLE II: PRICES FOR FILMS ON TV (1973)

Country	Half Hour TV Series ($)*	Feature Film ($)
Belgium	400–600	1200–2000
Denmark	200–250	1000–1200
France	2700–3000	7000–8000
Germany (West)	3000–3500 (undubbed)	4000–16000 (dubbed)
Ireland	70–75	275–300
Italy	600–900	5000–6000
Luxembourg	160–200	175–225
Netherlands	550–575	1850
United Kingdom	3500–4200	18000–30000

*1 hour episodes are approximately twice the price of half hour episodes.

Source: Variety 4 *April* 1973.

pressures from the forces of the market economy (particularly those coming from the United States), the three principal programming strategies also come under attack.

The Cultural Strategy

Since many television organisations are vertically integrated, they are able to decide how their programming budget is distributed between individual programmes and, in so doing, to sidestep the forces of market economics. Table III, which is drawn from a survey of British television, illustrates the general principles. In brief, the low purchase price of old films and mass audience TV series helps to cross-finance home produced series, arts programmes, modern drama and cultural productions in general. It is a strategy employed in one form or another by most European TV networks; although the smaller, poorer networks are obviously more dependent on bought programmes—particularly in the field of entertainment—than the richer ones.

Arts programmes (like *Omnibus*) and drama (*The Wednesday Play*) are produced at between ten and fourteen times the cost per viewer hour of purchased programmes. And it is this production strategy which allows television to act as a nursery for talent. The forerunner of *Omnibus* was *Monitor*, where Ken Russell and John Schlesinger learnt their craft; *The Wednesday Play* nurtured such talents as Tony Garnett, Ken Loach and Jack Gold. But the low purchase price of feature films is not only a cornerstone of TV's cultural strategy; it is also a key to its strategies both commercially and in co-production.

The Commercial Strategy

The commercial strategy uses the low purchase price of films and series to cross-finance productions which can not only be transmitted on the network but also sold overseas. Although there is an international market for some modestly budgeted programmes (nature films, for instance, and programmes made from exploration footage), the international market is geared in general to entertainment and in particular to TV film series. Production costs for this type of programme are likely to be proportionately high: a one-hour episode of a TV film series made in Britain might cost from £35,000 for a modest episode, upwards towards £80,000 or £100,000 for an episode of a 'quality' series presold to an American network. Costs of this order, and the capital outlay needed to finance a 13 or 26 episode series, mean that very few networks are capable of committing themselves to the commercial strategy. In Europe, its leading exponent is Associated Television, through its film production arm, ITC. It is also a strategy to which the BBC is increasingly committing itself.

The main markets for Associated Television and its products—such as *The Saint*, *The Avengers*, *Danger Man*, *Department S* and *The Persuaders*—are of course the United States networks. Whereas the cultural strategy uses the powers of the command economy to finance production against the run of market forces, the commercial strategy uses the powers of the command economy to launch the network into a higher—and hopefully more profitable—sector of the market economy. Commercial success lies in giving the American customer what he wants. According to *Variety*, 'the key factor is US agreement on the concept and the scripts for a successful and profitable global sale'; but later on it becomes apparent that 'US partners must be consulted on all aspects of production.' The crucial difference between these two formulations covers the period between script approval and completion of the picture. Larry Gelbart, who wrote and produced ATV's *Marty Feldman Series*, was recently quoted in *The Observer* on what this can mean to a programme's national identity, even in an area seemingly as robust as that of comedy. 'No special British references are allowed in the scripts and regional accents are discouraged. A censor from the American network sat in the gallery throughout the recording. She was not called censor, of course. They are given some euphemistic title like Department of Continuity Practice, but censor she was. She blue pencils everything from long hair to bad language, but her chief concern was to avoid any excess of nudity or cleavage.' It is not only during shooting, but also during programme editing, that American influence on TV product becomes apparent. On occasion, both *The Avengers* and *The Saint*, made by a British company, have had to be toned down by the IBA for a British audience.

While the commercial strategy has evident advantages in the opportunities it offers for growth, it also embodies a distinct cultural threat. Although something like 40 per cent of the finance for a TV series can be recouped from the British market, with some more coming from sales to Europe, it is virtually impossible for such a series to cover its costs without a US network sale. Although the BBC repeatedly emphasises its independence, because its contracts specify that it retains editorial control of its material, high production costs ensure that, over a long period, the commercial strategy cannot succeed without American sales. Explicitly or implicitly, the demands of this market are bound to play a significant part in shaping policy. Either way, there is a risk that the commercial strategy becomes a commissioned strategy, with the US networks playing the role of sponsor.

The Co-Production Strategy

Television co-production was developed initially in France, Italy and Spain as a defence strategy against the domination of white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant entertainment. With their similar backgrounds of romance cultures and languages and the Roman Catholic religion, the networks most frequently involved have been ORTF in France, RAI in Italy and TVE in Spain. More recently, the co-production practice has spread to include, among others, Germany, Belgium and the United Kingdom. The strategy can work in two directions: partnership can be between two networks, or between a national network and an independent production company.

Co-productions between networks offer several advantages. Initially, they were seen as a means of marrying the benefits of the cultural strategy to those of the commercial strategy without any of the corresponding disadvantages. By sharing production costs, they permitted the co-producing networks to move into the international market. In addition, the sphere of influence of the producing network was extended, pioneering the way for further sales. Despite these theoretical advantages, mounting production costs required the co-producers increasingly to look towards sales to recoup costs; and therefore to look to the more lucrative markets of Britain and the United States.

But the statutory 14 per cent foreign quota on ITV programming (unlike the

TABLE III: TV PROGRAMME COSTS AND AUDIENCES (1970)

Programme	Type	Cost Per Hour	Source	Audience	Cost Per 100,000 Viewers
British Film Night	Feature Film	£4,000	Bought	12·7 million	£31
The Virginian	Western Series	£4,000	Bought	11·3 million	£35
Blue Peter	Children's Programme	£4,000	Produced	5·4 million	£74
Sportsnight with Coleman	Live Sport	£6,000	Produced	8·9 million	£67
Omnibus	Arts Programme	£8–12,000	Produced	3·2 million	£250–375
Softly, Softly	Police Series	£25,000	Produced	10·9 million	£229
The Dave Allen Show	Light Entertainment	£25,000	Produced	9·7 million	£258
The Wednesday Play	Modern Drama	£25,000	Produced	5·8 million	£431

Source: Pratten, The Economics of Television.

cinema quota, this surprisingly remains on the statute book despite Britain's entry into the EEC), and the BBC's voluntary 15 per cent quota, are both devoted almost exclusively to American programmes. Consequently, the UK market remains virtually closed to European production. Penetration of the United States market has proved not much easier, and to date only one European TV series, the RAI/ORTF *Leonardo da Vinci*, has been shown on network television.

The relative failure of the co-production strategy in breaking into these markets has led both RAI and ORTF to join Associated Television in co-production deals worth some £5 million. Anglo-Italian ventures already announced include *The Life and Times of William Shakespeare*, *The Origins of the Mafia*, *Space 1999* and *Moses the Lawgiver*; while Anglo-French liaison promises 24 one-hour episodes of *Cabsmash*. According to Sir Lew Grade, head of ATV: 'Our potential partners look at us and know they will stand an excellent chance of seeing our joint efforts on the screens in up to 120 countries. And also of seeing their national identities displayed.'

But while the commercial potential of these co-productions looks promising, the cultural price could be high. It is not clear what Sir Lew means by 'national identity'; but in a recent paper read to the Guild of Film Production Accountants and Financial Administrators, Bernard Kingham, general manager of ATV's production arm ITC, revealed some of the terms of the contract. All the co-productions are to be shot in English, and production is to be in the hands of the British partner because 'production must vest in him so that the series may qualify for British quota.' The continental partner has 'rights of consultation and also the right to contribute or nominate certain factors'—which would not seem to leave him much of a cultural identity.

The co-production strategy, effectively, has yielded to the commercial strategy. Even Anglo-European co-productions must meet the demands of the US networks. Or, as Mr. Kingham puts it, 'it would be most imprudent to mount such a series without a pre-sale.'

Cinema versus Television

The command nature of many TV networks has made competition between the national network and the national film/cinema industry an unfair battle. In addition to TV's inherent advantages of immediacy, electronic distribution and home viewing, the monopolistic nature of television franchising has kept the purchase price for independent productions (old feature films among them) exceptionally low. The uses to which these economic advantages have been put, and the national policies in relation to both TV and cinema as sources of finance for film production, have varied throughout Europe.

Smaller countries, such as Belgium, can do little to sidestep competition: its neighbours' networks can cover nearly all the country. But in countries like France, Italy, Germany and Britain, where geography creates a monopolistic situation, it is possible for a national policy to exist towards both the cinema and television.

TABLE IV: RATIO BETWEEN INFORMATION AND ENTERTAINMENT PROGRAMMES (1971)

Country	Network	Information	Entertainment
France	ORTF	50%	50%
Italy	RAI	51%	49%
Germany	ARD	38%	62%
Germany	ZDF	38%	62%
U.K.	BBC	46%	54%
U.K.	ITV	34%	66%

Source: Varis, Op. cit.

In France and Italy, where ORTF and RAI have the television monopoly, the tendency is to direct programming away from entertainment towards more informational and cultural programmes. As for network policy on transmitting feature films, in Italy only two films are shown each week, and one of them is Italian. In France, under the 'Déclaration Commune' signed in 1971 between the Director General of ORTF and the Minister of Cultural Affairs, ORTF undertook to limit the programming of feature films to those days and times when cinema attendances were high, to refrain from transmitting films on Saturday evenings and to show fewer films on Sunday afternoons. Perhaps not coincidentally, in 1972 French cinema attendances rose by 4·7 per cent. Significantly, this was not the pattern in the regions of Strasbourg and Nancy, where French viewers can tune in to German TV programmes. Here, cinema attendances dwindled by a further 4 per cent.

As Table IV shows, in both German and British television there is a higher emphasis on entertainment, under the spur of network competition—between the BBC and ITV in the United Kingdom, and between ARD and ZDF in Western Germany. There is not enough data available to gauge the precise effects of these programme policies on national cinema-going habits. Other factors, as varied as car ownership, weather and standards of domestic comfort, also have their effect. But cinema-going is more popular in France and Italy than in either Germany or the United Kingdom.

In the United Kingdom, the IBA permits the commercial network to transmit up to six feature films per week, of which not more than two shall be British. (Remember that there is also an 86 per cent British quota on all programmes.) The BBC adopts a similar policy. During 1973, some 940 feature films were networked on all three UK channels, whereas in Germany approximately one-third of that number were networked by both ARD and ZDF.

But while a policy of restraint in TV programming may help cinema attendances, it does little to boost national production.

TABLE V: CINEMA ATTENDANCE IN EUROPE (1972)

Country	Population (millions)	Cinema Admissions (millions)	Cinema Visits Per Year
France	51·3	183·1	3·57
Italy	54·8	553·6	10·10
Germany	61·7	150·8	2·44
U.K.	55·7	156·6	2·81

Sources: CNC (France), SIAE (Italy), SPIO (Germany), DTI (U.K.).

And unless steps are taken to stimulate national production, it may be the foreign films that are playing to packed cinemas.

Film Production Strategies

Any film production strategy must take into account the way in which the films are viewed. The traditional pattern has been one of screening in cinemas followed by television release after a period of some five years. Alternatively, films are made for television, transmitted once or possibly twice, and never seen again. Other outlets such as cable television and videocassettes are technically feasible, but it is doubtful how far or how soon they will become economically significant. In the United States, the capital markets have turned cautious about the speculative risks of investment in cable television. The much talked about videocassette boom is dependent on a general expansion of consumer affluence, which now looks increasingly unlikely until the international energy and commodity crises have been resolved. For the time being, it looks as though cinemas and television will remain the principal outlets; and across Europe, television networks are becoming more and more involved in positively supporting the film/cinema economy.

In Italy, where RAI is required by law to co-operate with the film industry, there has long been a tradition of film/TV co-production, and much of the recent work of directors such as Fellini and Rossellini has been financed in this way. In France, ORTF undertook in 1971 under the 'Déclaration Commune' to put some ten million francs into the film/cinema economy. Half of this sum was to be invested in co-financing productions with commercial companies in which ORTF would be the minority participant, while the other half would be contributed to the film aid fund, in return for which ORTF would have representatives on most of the consultative and deliberative committees of the Centre Nationale or of the Ministry, including the Commission for advances against receipts.

Between 1960 and 1971, the German television networks financed production by German film companies with some 400 million DM. Although the provision for the TV networks to pay 20,000 DM into the German aid fund for every feature film transmitted was rejected by the Bundesrat, the two networks have now presented a film finance plan which would be valid for five years, and which would amount to some 34 million DM.

In the United Kingdom, television does little, if anything, to support the film/cinema economy; although there has been discussion about the possibilities of a television levy, which would be paid on all feature films transmitted and put into an aid fund.

Future Strategies

The command elements in the television economy, particularly those run by State organisations, are having to yield to market forces as the stock of old movies begins to be used up, and the health of the national film/cinema economies continues to decline in the face of TV competition. No longer is it possible for the cheapest programmes to

▶ page 175

'The land that major studios are on will become so expensive that they will no longer be able to function where they are,' Robert Aldrich forecast in 1968, the year *The Dirty Dozen* allowed him to buy his way out of the Hollywood system. 'The business will scatter into a number of satellite studios such as mine.'

Five financially disastrous—and ineffably personal—films later, Aldrich once again finds himself in need of a blockbuster. He hopes that it will be *The Longest Yard*: a *Dirty Dozen* variation he is filming for Albert Ruddy and Paramount, in which an imprisoned professional football player (Burt Reynolds) leads a team of misfits against warden Eddie Albert's semi-pro guards' team. He is filming at Reidsville (Georgia) State Prison, on a football field which Paramount has constructed there. His cast includes just as many real prisoners and football players as it does actors playing them—with 'absolutely no women allowed on the set,' I am told, until the climactic football game is completed.

Silver-haired and burly at 55, Aldrich moves resolutely through this quiet hurricane of personalities. When he is not studying his storyboards (no drawings; only scribbled entries, ordered sequentially, like 'Sonny gets hurt' and 'Guardsmen fumble'), he is conferring with favourite cameraman Joe Biroc. Ironically, Paramount has given Aldrich as much freedom as he could wish. 'He is a proven director,' explains boom man Jaime Contrerez, who first worked with Aldrich on *Vera Cruz* (1954). 'And a wizard with technique. Like John Huston, only better. He *prepares* like John Huston.' 'He moves along like a TV director, when he has control of a film,' adds the unit publicist, Dave Davies. Both must be right. By lunchtime, when I interview Aldrich, close to a dozen shots are completed. Film-making is still a serious business for Robert Aldrich.

Up to date with ROBERT ALDRICH

An Interview by Harry Ringel

This film, *The Longest Yard*, has nothing whatsoever to do with the Aldrich studios?

ROBERT ALDRICH: There are no more Aldrich studios.

So *Variety* is accurate in quoting you as terming the whole venture 'a disaster'?

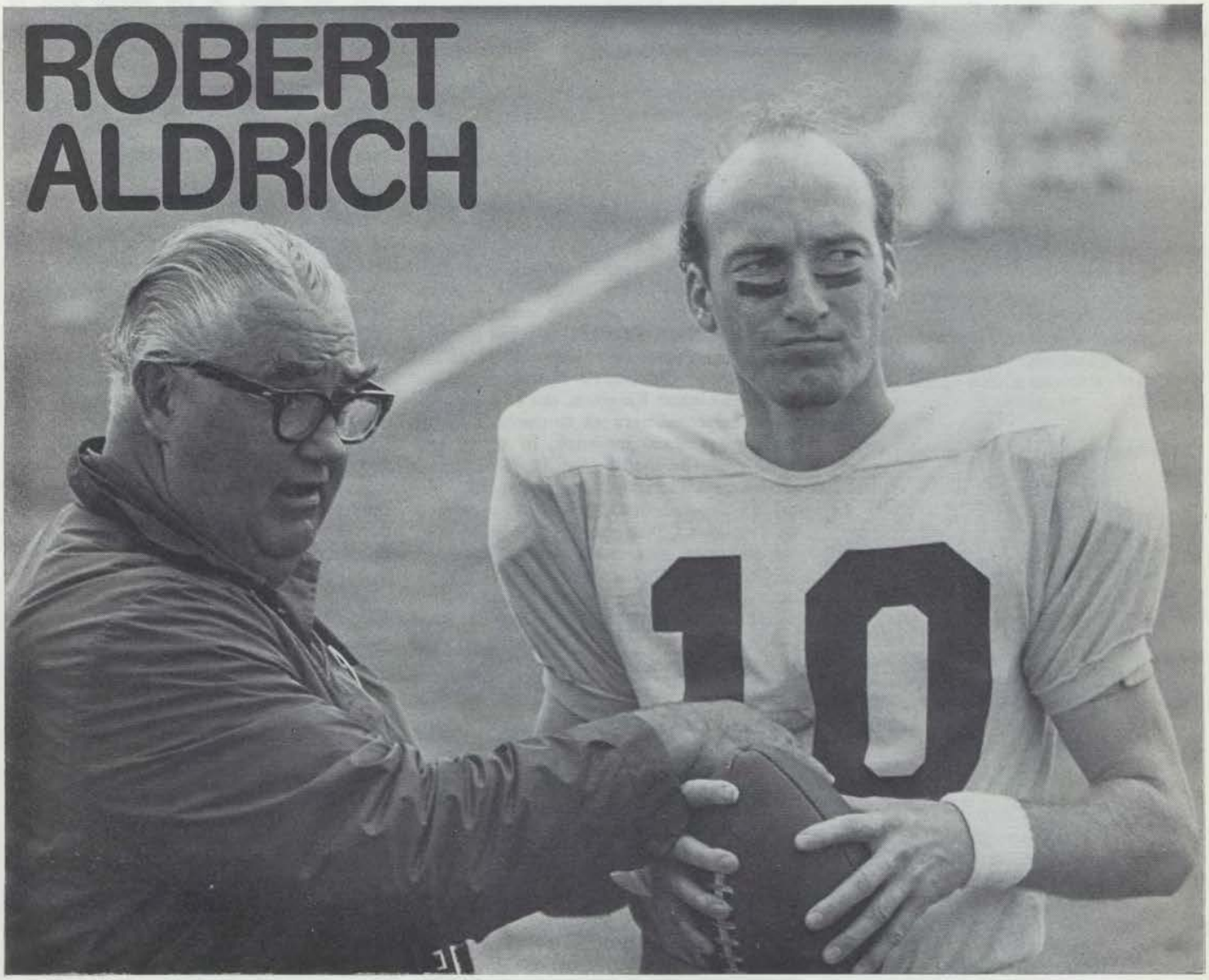
Right.

If you had a chance, would you try again?

Well, we built a better mousetrap but the mice went out of business. The equipment here is ours. We rented it back from the people to whom we sold the studio. And if I do anything again, I'd build three new units: a sound unit, a camera unit, an electrical unit. I wouldn't buy a studio again; but I would build those three units.

What was the working arrangement between you and ABC, as far as the Aldrich Studios films were concerned? Did you have free choice of projects?

We had a six picture deal with ABC. That was terminated after four pictures, with much mutual acrimony. Now in those pictures they had three approvals: budget, story and cast. They could have had final editing, if it hadn't been satisfactory. But during those four pictures they never



exercised any cutting control or any story control. The only time they did interfere was with the casting of Cliff Robertson in *Too Late the Hero*, and some of the casting in *The Grissom Gang*, which was the end of our relationship. But other than that, we had no casting problems, no budget problems.

Who wanted Cliff Robertson?

They wanted Cliff Robertson.

Who did you want?

Anybody but Cliff Robertson. You, me, anybody.

Is it coincidence or design that, in contrast to your early career, your more recent pictures haven't had any political focus?

That's presupposing that they haven't.

I'm thinking of *The Dirty Dozen* (1967), which grinds *Attack!'s* anti-authoritarian axe for the first reel, then focuses instead on the rehabilitation of the criminals.

The commercial success of *The Dirty Dozen* is reputed to be that it caught the wave of anti-authoritarian attitudes which were dormant, but became full-blown in 1967-68. I'd love to say we sat back there and knew that was going to happen during the release period of the picture. We knew the attitudes were there. But nobody knew people were going to identify with *The Dirty Dozen* so much as they did as a manifestation of their disagreement with the system. Probably, they did it out of proportion. But that's obviously in large part responsible for the success of that picture, over and above its intrinsic entertainment value. Younger people by the bushel thought it was an anti-establishment picture.

You've worked with repeated success in several genres: the Western, the war picture, the gangster film, the horror film. Do you ever try to pick up a theme you left undeveloped in some earlier film and work on it?

You try very, very hard—and unsuccessfully for a while—not to do any of the things you did in *The Big Knife*. You try hard not to do any of the things in *The Dirty Dozen* that you did in *Attack!*. It's pretty unimaginative to be repetitious and just steal from yourself. There are some situations where similar attitudes are inescapable. *Too Late the Hero* and *Flight of the Phoenix*, with all their differences, are still just patrol pictures. It's *x* number of men trying to get from here to there and back, or from here to there and survive. So there are a number of built-in, inescapable similarities which you try to camouflage, but they're set. They're standard. You can camouflage them, but you can't escape them.

***The Legend of Lylah Clare* (1968), your last studio [MGM] film before moving to the Aldrich Studios, seems loaded with personal touches. Is the film in any sense autobiographical?**

Oh no. I teased Borgnine into taking a couple of personal idiosyncrasies and putting them over the Cohn-Mayer character, but no, I think it's autobiographical only in that we may have exaggerated Peter Finch's impatience at suffering fools, and that he has to be more patient than he's willing to be.

What about the highbrow French critics, the producer's *Big Knife* philistinism, the *Dirty Dozen* marquee?

Oh sure, there were a couple of obvious zingers, but nothing autobiographical in the story context. Only a couple of jokes within jokes.

Was Kim Novak's character based on one particular sex symbol, or was she an amalgamation of myths?

Amalgamation of myths. The teleplay which Tuesday Weld did, and did marvellously, was much more strikingly fashioned to fit the Monroe mould, and we tried hard not to do that.

***Lylah Clare* has been compared to 8½, *Vertigo* and *The Big Knife*. Do you think any of those analogies hold up?**

It's hard to tell, you know. A picture fails, and by 'fail' you mean it doesn't make enough money to break even. It has nothing to do with how critically well received it is or isn't. Now, a great many buffs have an inordinate fondness for *Lylah*. But *Lylah Clare* was a failure, and if it's a failure, then you have to say that either the subject matter or the way you handled the subject matter didn't communicate itself to the people. And if it did, they didn't care about it. There are 25 cop-outs: who cared about Peter Finch, and is Kim Novak a joke in her own time? But there's *also* the fact that since you're the producer-director, since you bought the material, since you developed it, there is something apparent in the story or in the way you told it that people just aren't interested in. I've gotten extraordinarily high praise on this picture; I think inordinate, and unjustifiable. If the director-producer—and, for all intents and purposes in that picture, the writer—can't, with no limitation on money, communicate to an audience what he wants them to be interested in, fascinated in and/or amused by, then he has failed. Then he shouldn't have made that picture.

You blamed the failure of *Too Late the Hero* (1969) on the concomitance of Kent State; hardly enough reason for a film as good as that one not to succeed as well as it might have done.

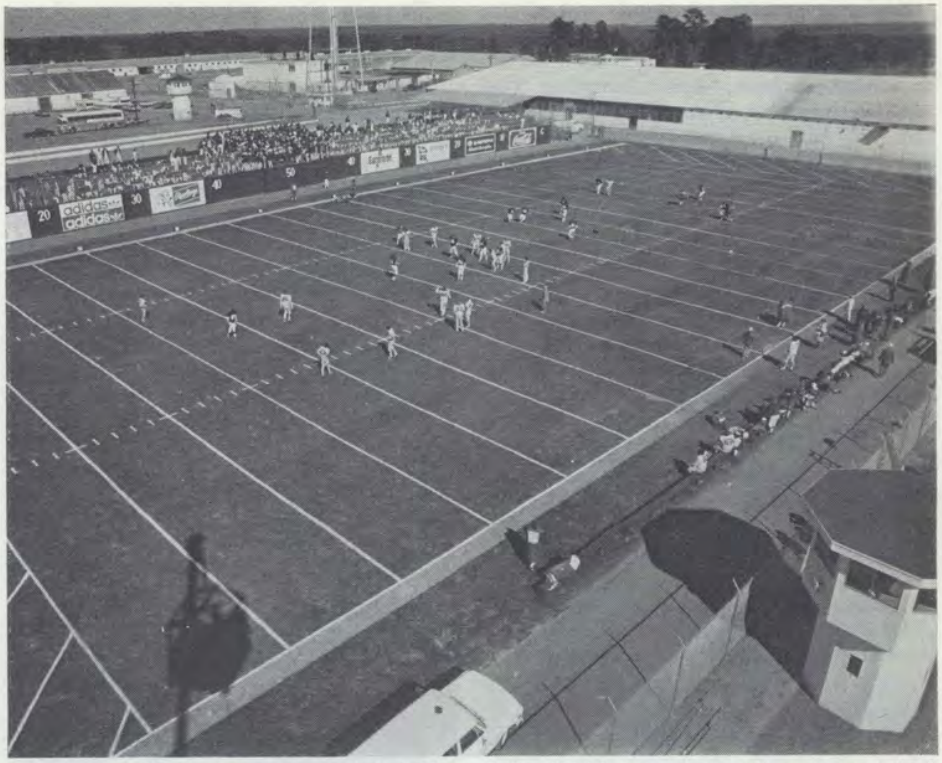
There are different kinds of failures. There are failures you never think are right or justifiable or understandable. For example, I put *Too Late the Hero*, *Flight of the Phoenix* and *The Grissom Gang* in a category that says these are all fine movies, very well made films. People understood what they were about, what they aimed to say. They were entertaining and exciting and should have been a success. That they weren't means that something else was wrong besides the way the picture was made. Now, I don't put *Lylah Clare*, *Ten Seconds to Hell*, *Samson and Delilah* or whatever it was (*Sodom and Gomorrah*) in that category. Those I think were not well made, the story-telling functions were not done properly, inventively, interestingly enough. So those are the failures I understand. I'll *never* understand the failure of *The Grissom Gang*, *Too Late the Hero*, or *Flight of the Phoenix*, because they were marvellous movies.

***Flight of the Phoenix* lost money?**

Oh yeah. Maybe in another five years *Phoenix* will break even. I don't know how to make those movies any better. You know, you usually go back and have second thoughts: if I'd only done this, if I'd only tried that. That's bullshit. Those were very well made movies. I don't mind taking the blame for the dogs, because everybody makes them. But I don't think those were dogs. I think they deserved to do infinitely better than they did.

Thematically, *Too Late the Hero* seems to complete a statement on heroism which you began in *Attack!* and continued in *The Dirty Dozen*. *Attack!* being cynical, *Dirty Dozen* redemptive, and *Too Late the Hero* utterly random. Did you intend this sort of development?

Reading your question, you get as much



'The Longest Yard'. Above: the football field set. Left: Aldrich instructs guards' team quarterback Ed Lauter

out of the question as you do out of the answer. I would have thought, for example, that there is a *growth* in cynicism, rather than what you interpret as redemption. You see, there's one set of standards on a picture that you have any real control over, that you look for. You look for *that man*. It's really summed up in *The Big Knife*, when Wes Addy turns to Jack Palance and says, 'Struggle, Charlie, you may still win a blessing.' It's really not winning. Winning is terribly, terribly important; but you can be a winner if you lose better than the guy that won. It's a Hemingway extension with different kinds of nuances, because I would think that Hemingway couldn't accept not winning. I would think that Jack Palance wins when he commits suicide. I would think that much as I hate it, Cliff Robertson's character in *Too Late the Hero*, had it been played as I wanted it, would have won, even though he is killed and Michael Caine lives.

So your appreciation of Borgnine's villainy in *Emperor of the North* (1973) doesn't mean that you are mellowing?

When that contest is joined, there is a framework of mutual respect; and it has, or should have, the same influence as gladiators. Shack (Borgnine's character) had a total, singular, measurable authority corruption that only had to do with that train he guards. He might be a good father, he might be a nice guy, he might be a great fellow around the beer hall, but he had total integrity towards his corruption. Therefore, Lee Marvin's hobo character could have extraordinary respect for him, in the arena. They would never have any conflicts outside the arena, and that's why Marvin doesn't kill him when he has the chance. And why Borgnine doesn't kill *him*, when he has the opportunity. Because they have extremely high mutual regard. It's the manner in which their dedication to doing their particular thing pays off.

Now. I know that to be true in terms of audience reaction. I don't know that to be true in terms which hurt the commercial acceptance of the picture. For example, we previewed *Emperor of the North* six or seven times, I guess. There is almost no applause, in any of the previews we took it to, when Borgnine gets thrown off the train.

You structured it that way.

Right. The applause is saved for the opportunistic guy (Keith Carradine), who is going along for the free ride. They're delighted when he gets thrown off. But Borgnine's character has his own integrity. He's not going to welsh on what he is. He stands for one particular thing. He doesn't vacillate. If there's a mellowing on my part, it's probably in the fact that in the process of growing older you sadly realise that there might be two sides to a question, instead of only one.

In *Ulzana's Raid* (1972), the arena is western civilisation.

You were very deft to have caught that. Not many people did. Your problem there is a marvellous story plotted around a big major star. The focus of that picture should have been between the Indian scout (Jorge Luke) and the young lieutenant (Bruce Davison). Then you would have a very clear picture.

The Indian scout was submerged.

The guy who told you the power theory about how the more slowly you kill, the more power you draw from your victim. He was a marvellous actor, and that should have been the principal conflict. Now. You couldn't do that because (*a*) you couldn't get the picture financed, and (*b*) you couldn't get the picture made without a Burt Lancaster. Burt was playing an 1870 guy who had seen *Apache*. That was his frame of reference: he respected the Indians, because he knew more about them than the soldiers did. Yet you didn't feel hatred for Davison's character, because you were shown over and over again that he didn't know anything. He didn't know any better than to make those painful and irrational mistakes

'Ulzana's Raid': Bruce Davison, Richard Jaeckel. 'The Grissom Gang': the kidnapping of Miss Blandish (Kim Darby)

at the Indians' expense. So the film was saying at various levels that through ignorance of other peoples' cultures, behaviours, deities, customs, you do more damage to them than by intention.

***Ulzana's Raid's* politics don't seem to matter so much as the codes of masculinity coming up against each other: a private conflict, out of which the most public conflicts could be drawn.**

I wouldn't have thought it was purely masculine. Maybe 'masculine' in the sense that it was done by a majority of masculine players. In theory, it was supposed to be metaphorical. In practice, it wasn't that important.

Let's go back to a film we have left out, *The Grissom Gang* (1971). The book, James Hadley Chase's *No Orchids for Miss Blandish*, had caused a minor uproar in World War II England, typified by George Orwell's remark that it 'took for granted the most complete corruption and self-seeking as the norm of human behaviour.' Were you aware of the book's reputation when you decided to film it?

I'd read the Orwell article a long time ago. I think his comments are well-taken and true. But *The Grissom Gang* should have been at the head of the nostalgia cycle, and should have taken off. Just think of the number of pictures between now and then that have been made about the 1930s, and how successful they have been. I think we read the scale absolutely perfectly. Never mind *The Godfather*, the Texas town picture (*The Last Picture Show*), the whole series of pictures which followed *The Grissom Gang*. I think the timing was perfect, the style of the picture was perfect. If you're asking me why that picture wasn't a success, I haven't a clue.

Basically, the script adds all the attic scenes and amplifies the love/hate relationship between Slim (Scott Wilson) and Barbara Blandish (Kim Darby).

It's in the book. He's more retarded, but he's equally infatuated, taken by her. And what we finally did, I feel very sad about losing. In the book, Barbara Blandish jumps out of the window. In *The Grissom Gang*, she jumped in the river. We showed that version a number of times. The people in the audience came to respect her—not like her, respect her; and they were sad that the only person they had any 'normal' identification with took her life. We finally figured that her life was lost and useless anyway, so why go through the dramatic ten minutes it took for her to escape from a cop and jump in the river with the intention of drowning? So we ended it as she drove away from her father, but we shot the other ending up in the Sacramento River. It was very effective, very well done, but it was like putting two periods. The picture was over when she drove out of the barnyard, alienated from her father. Nothing was ever going to happen to her again, her life was ruined, spent. So the drowning was just a redundancy which we didn't put in the picture.

You have commented on the relationship between pain and ecstasy in your films—which is never clearer than in *The Grissom Gang*, when Barbara Blandish climaxes while watching Slim knife his brother (Tony Musante). Does this reaction lock her into loving Slim, or liberate her to do so?

Kim and I talked about it. The only thing we hadn't thought of—and perhaps that shows a shallowness on my part—was that the orgasm would *free* her of the inhibition not to have an affair with Slim. I felt that by then she had an extraordinary fondness for him. He would do anything, which in his framework meant go against his mother, if she would only be sympathetic. Of course, the supreme gift was her giving him his manhood, which was questionable at best, the night before he died. So I didn't intend for that orgasm to foretell her eventually giving herself to Slim. I wanted *that* to come out of the fact that she knew he was going to die, and how often in anybody's life does even a dog love you that well, let alone a human being? The smallest reward in the world would be to

give him his manhood, if that was possible. So had I thought about it, I probably wouldn't have let her do it, if I had thought that the issue was going to be clouded by the moment of Tony Musante's death.

Healthy sexual relationships seem close to impossible in your films—and never more unlikely than here.

Possibly. We had a much sexier scene in the barn between Kim and Slim, the kind that gets the grain of the Beau Geste, the Beau Geste being the gift of his manhood. But we elected to go with the more gentle, tender one. I think it was right. Christ, we'd had ten yards of slobbering and saliva in that picture already, so we did it the gentle, tender way and it seemed to be much more effective.

You've never made a movie about children—though enough of your characters act like them. Accident or design?

It's mostly accident. We had some kids playing Crawford and Davis as children . . . Perhaps it's subconscious. I had terrible experiences when I was assistant to directors where there were kids in pictures. Like Milestone in *The Red Pony*. But I don't make any conscious effort not to make kid pictures.

Whatever happened to *Kinderspiel* [an unfilmed Aldrich property of the Fifties]?

That script was owned by an actor, John Something-or-other. I had options on the property, and we optioned it and we optioned it and I could never get that picture planned. We even found a spot in Germany to make the picture, a sensational locale in the Hartz Mountains. We could have made a very favourable deal with the German studios to make the picture, but we could never get anybody to finance it. Today it's very political, very anti-war, but there's still nobody to finance it. The story is the Pied Piper, except that the Pied Piper is other children. And it's strangely violent, because a dwarf is set among the children to corrupt them. They find out that he's not a child, and they kill him. Then the children leave the adults, because the town is going to war. A brilliant script. Some day it'll be made by people interested in seeing the film, and not necessarily with stars.

I also lost track of *Taras Bulba* after your last interview with Truffaut. How did you finally lose it to Yul Brynner and Harold Hecht?

We had four or five *Taras Bulba* scripts, the last of which I thought was sensational. I took it all around the world and finally got it put together in Yugoslavia with the English, and with Anthony Quinn to play the lead. Then United Artists pulled out of the scheme at the last moment, which caused me to come close to bankruptcy another time. When I came back to the United States, after having been in Europe for two years, I again thought I could put the damn thing together. So I met a guy in a restaurant one morning. He said, 'How much have you got for *Taras Bulba*?' Well, the taxman had already put the 'for sale' sign on my house. And I said, 'About $65,000 in cash in a year and a half.' He said, 'Will you take $75,000 cash for it?' and I said I think so. He came back the next day and said, 'I'll give you $25,000 cash, $25,000 in six months, and $25,000 in a year.' He was a guy of some means. Not that kind of money but some means. So I went back to the taxman and said, 'If I can get a letter to that effect, will you lift the lien on my house?' He agreed, so I sold it.

Now there's a before and after to that story. The before is that when I finished the second draft, not the final draft, I took it to Burt Lancaster. I said, 'I think you should play Taras,' and he said, 'So do I, but I can't do it this year.' I said, 'I don't want to wait until next year, you know, you get hit by a taxi and what have I done with a year. I think it's a great script.' He said, 'I can't do it.' Well, he didn't do it, and I didn't wait.

The after is that, through that exposure, Hecht-Lancaster knew about that script, and watched what happened to it. United Artists, who were their partners then, agreed to finance the script, and this man that I had met at the restaurant was an agent acting on their behalf. Obviously, had I known that Hecht-Lancaster wanted it, I wouldn't have sold it to them. Or I would have sold it to them on a different set of terms, with me directing and all kinds of things. So that's what happened to *Taras Bulba*.

What about *Coffee, Tea or Me*?

We owned the book. We put a fortune into the book. Ted Flicker did a very funny, dirty script. We had our girl as the only hostess who was a virgin, who was trying not to be a virgin. In other words, we took the Doris Day formula of all those successful *Pillow Talk* movies and inverted it. Instead of the only girl in the office who was retaining her virginity, her friends were trying to get her laid, and something always happened to interfere. It was a very good script. ABC wouldn't make it, and when our option expired, CBS bought it and they went back to the straight title and the more mundane situation about stewardesses' lives.

Have you followed the TV-movies market at all?

No. You know, that's a life in itself. I've seen some things I've really admired on there. And I think we'll all be doing that kind of picture, not for TV but for some kind of distribution system, eventually. But I try very hard not to get involved.

I'd like to offer you the last part of the interview as a platform, to respond to criticisms people have levelled against you and your work over the past few years. For example, I don't believe that you ever replied, in print, to Bosley Crowther's accusation that *The Dirty Dozen* 'encourages a spirit of brazen hooliganism' in its audience. Would you care to reply now?

You have to feel like a politician. If Crowther knocks you, you're in very good company. And I certainly would much rather have a spirit of 'brazen hooliganism' than what passes for patriotism nowadays.

The *Christian Science Monitor's* criticism of an 'uncomfortable woman-maligning streak' in *Emperor of the North*?

I've heard that people have said this. In fact, I got a letter from Vincent Canby telling me that I am anti-woman and anti-feminist. And I wrote him, though I very seldom write critics. It may be—but if it is, I'm wasting an awful lot of my non-working hours. I think women are a pain in the ass most of the time, but I'm sure women think men are a pain in the ass most of the time. I don't think it's anti-lib to say that women's goals collide with men's goals. It's all very well to say that the two can live harmoniously, but I don't think that's quite true.

In his review of *Emperor*, Canby calls you the best director of 'this kind' of film working today.

I think I'm the best director in the world working in this kind of film. I don't think there's any doubt about it. The problem is, I'd like to work with some other kind of film.

Do we still have to make such distinctions?

He's talking about big, broad-actioned, multi-charactered, large-canvased, larger-than-life pictures. This comes out of a comparison with Peckinpah. Unfortunately, that *is* a kind of film. And also, unfortunately, if you do them well, people keep giving them to you. I'd love to do a musical. I don't see anybody offering me one. I'd love to do a comedy. But I don't get a chance.

What do you think of Peckinpah's work?

I think Peckinpah is a fine director. I don't think he's as good as I am, but I think he's a sensational director. I'm not sure I like the picture he made in Texas (*The Getaway*). I don't think that's as good as he can be. But some of his other pictures, like the Mexican picture with the Borgnine/Holden stock company (*The Wild Bunch*), I liked. But I think we did it before, with *Vera Cruz*.

Joan Crawford's statement (quoted in *Films in Review*, June-July 1973) that you love 'evil, horrendous, vile things'?

Well, I'm very fond of Joan. If the shoe fits, put it on.

Whenever one of your films is released, someone always gets worried about the violence. What is your position on the 'monkey see, monkey do' theory of explicit violence in film?

I'm at odds with Pastore as to what violence does to people. I don't think violence in movies creates other violence. On the contrary, I think it helps to expend violence. I think if you *see* it done, instead of going home and kicking the dog, maybe you just go home and kick the cat. It reduces the target area. You vicariously expend some of your antagonism against the people you don't like in the film.

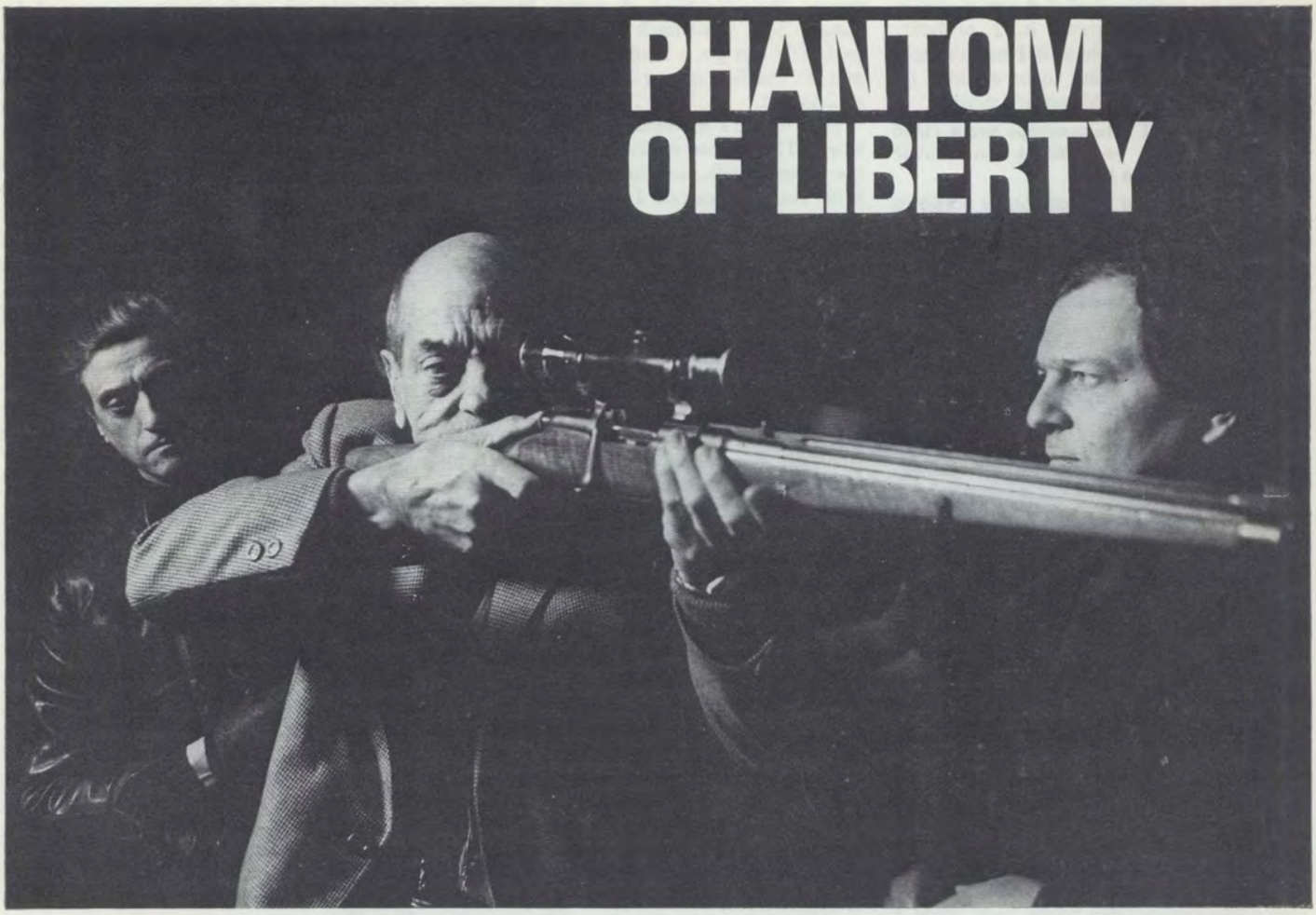
You once stated, concerning censorship, that 'the final goal should be no censorship at all.' Do you view the recent Supreme Court decision absolutely as a step in the wrong direction?

As you may not know, I'm vice-president of the Screen Directors' Guild. We have taken a stand that is singularly the same as my own. There's no such thing as their dirty picture and our dirty picture. There are pictures which should be controlled for adult viewing that may be improper, and may exert undue influence on young people. But that's all.

So even if they don't think *The Longest Yard* should be shown here in Glenville, Georgia, it should?

Yes, sir. ■

PHANTOM OF LIBERTY



Buñuel on set: lining up a shot

Axel Madsen

'A spectre is haunting Europe—the spectre of Communism. All the powers of old Europe have entered into a holy alliance to exorcise this ghost. Pope and Czar, Metternich and Guizot, French radicals and German police spies.'—The Communist Manifesto

Le Fantôme de la Liberté takes its title from the opening line of Karl Marx's 116-year-old Manifesto, but Luis Buñuel's new film has of course nothing to do with Marx. To Buñuel, freedom is always like a ghost, and *Le Fantôme de la Liberté* is a controlled look at things that don't necessarily add up. 'It's about *le hasard des rencontres*—chance meetings,' says Serge Silberman, the persistent Frenchman who, with the exception of *Tristana*, has produced Buñuel's last four pictures and who has a knack for luring him back behind the camera every other year. 'It's about improvised connections, about escaping the freedom of choice,' says Jean-Claude Carrière, who, with the exception of *Tristana*, has been co-scriptwriter of Buñuel's last five films. Buñuel doesn't say anything. He is too busy filming.

Le Fantôme de la Liberté is Buñuel's 31st film, since *Un Chien Andalou* launched him on a career that has a beginning, no middle, and an astonishing, still continuing third act. The new film promises to be his most whimsical, one of his most youthful and possibly his most innovatory, since it has no characters running right through but only characters relaying each other. 'Le hasard des rencontres.' There are 58 speaking parts—nurses, gendarmes, soldiers, a doctor getting slapped and a little girl waiting in the office of a police chief while he issues an all-points bulletin to find her. There is a telephone located in a grave. There is a tank hunting rabbits and an opening sequence taking place during the Napoleonic wars.

The opening is not only passably Buñuelian but historically correct. When in 1814 the Spaniards finally managed to chase Napoleon's armies back across the Pyrenees, after a six-year conflict that saw the invention of guerrilla warfare, they didn't choose freedom but restored to the throne Fernando VII, from whom the French had liberated them in 1808. In the streets of Madrid, the restoration of the decrepit and debauched king was accompanied by chants of 'Vivan las cadenas' ('Long live the chains'). In his opening sequence, Buñuel has French soldiers line up and shoot Spanish guerrilleros. Before the prisoners fall under the bullets, they shout 'Vivan las cadenas.'

Next, we see the ragged French troops in a church in Toledo, drying their rain-soaked uniforms on the altar and turning spits of roasting pork over fires started with wood from broken pews. Next, we are in Paris, 1974.

The large cast is made up of French 'featured players' and character actors, often faces we know but somehow cannot quite place: Milena Vukotic, François Maistre, Paul Frankeur, Michel Lonsdale, Pierre Maguelon, Muni, Claude Piéplu. Buñuel's long-time first assistant Pierre Lary plays a death-row convict signing autographs like a movie star on the court steps; and the cast also includes Jean-Claude Brialy, although not in any 'above the title' position. When Buñuel was halfway through the shooting schedule (ten weeks, which for him is exceptionally long), Michel Piccoli and several other stars were expected to join *Le Fantôme*.

Two weeks after shooting started, Buñuel turned 74, making him the oldest master still at it (Alfred Hitchcock, who is six months older, is *preparing* a new film, a screen adaptation of Victor Canning's novel *Rainbird Pattern*). When Buñuel finished *Le Journal d'une Femme de Chambre* in 1962, he was sure that he was going to die before the year was out, and since then each new picture has been advance-billed as his last. Nobody around him takes these swan-song pronunciamentos too seriously. Serge Silberman feels that once Buñuel has spent six months at one of his hideaways, he is

Old master and little girl lost

restless enough to begin another picture. So far, Silberman has been right seven times.

On the set, Buñuel is bouncy enough. A slim, slightly impatient figure in chartreuse-coloured trousers and Lacoste jersey, he leaps between TV monitor and actors, chain-smoking Gitanes and directing in a melodious French in which only the r's denote the faraway Iberian origins. Because he is hard of hearing, he had adapted a closed-circuit video system. When the camera rolls, he sits in a canvas chair in front of a TV monitor, plugged into the sound recording via an amplified earset, and follows his actors performing twenty feet away on his little black and white screen. 'It's like a television viewer who can alter what he sees or who has made up his own teleplay,' he says.

Interiors are being filmed at the draughty old Billancourt studio. When I visited the set, Buñuel was shooting a police station setting with Julien Bertheau as the *commissaire* and 10-year-old Valérie Blanco playing the lost and/or abducted girl whom the entire Paris police force is alerted to find. The decor is grey and dank enough to accommodate any Jean Gabin 1930s movie, but with added touches. Behind the commissioner's desk hangs a reproduction of Goya's 'Fusillade du 3 Mai', that hallucinating painting of the 1808 execution of Spanish rebels by French troops.

The scene, played with bureaucratic gravity, is absurd. While Bertheau calls in a policeman, the child Valérie stands in front of his desk. 'Is she the girl?' the uniformed policeman asks. Bertheau nods and invites him to take a good look. The *brigadier* crosses to Valérie and enumerates the particulars of her dress—blue coat, white socks, black shoes. Bertheau gets up and delicately interrupts the description by asking the cop if he has noticed his own shoes. 'Oh, pardon,' says the policeman, salutes and exits. Cut.

After a first run-through which he watches on his monitor, Buñuel is back with his actors, correcting positions and gestures. He has of course a reputation for working remarkably fast and casually—a carry-over from the years spent in marginal cinema. The casualness is supposed to account for some of the ambiguity in his work, the unresolved trick endings that often leave audiences dangling, and for occasional shoddy casting—especially in the potboilers of the Mexican period. On the set, however, he is all nervous attention, making Bertheau wait a beat before he gets up, acting out the policeman's part with exaggerated, jerky gestures. He has the actors repeat the ending and distractedly rubs his lips and thin moustache while he watches. Everybody talks very loud to him. The actors call him Monsieur, the crew Don Luis.

'It is no longer possible to scandalise people as we did in 1930,' he says after the take. 'Today, you have to do it with sweet subversion. The idea of *Le Fantôme* here is to make people laugh and, when they leave, apprehensive.'

He shoots a second, spare take and asks for close-ups. With the crew, Edmond Richard, Buñuel's cameraman on *Le Charme discret de la Bourgeoisie* (and also Orson Welles' cinematographer on *The Trial* and *Chimes at Midnight*), swings the Panavision camera around on Bertheau behind his desk. Most of the crew members have been with Buñuel for twelve years and most know his temperament, his no nonsense working method, and his sometimes disconcerting sense of humour.

Buñuel says that he wants to remain simple, and likes to joke about that too. 'I put the camera here and when I don't know what to do any more I say "Cut!"' The reason he shoots fast, he says, is that he gets bored after the sixth or seventh week. He made *The Exterminating Angel* in eighteen days, *Viridiana* in twenty-three.

'There are those who say I'm cruel and perverse,' he says. 'I'm exactly the opposite. I'm ridiculing the fetishes that cause cruelty and perversion. I hate violence and pornography. When I was young, surrealism was the most violent artistic movement. We used violence as a weapon against the establishment. Now, society itself has become so violent that it is hard to use violence to make an artistic comment.'

'On the set he is all nervous attention'

Don Luis likes to play the Aragonian peasant he almost is, to remain anarchic and rural, to preserve his feeling for metaphysics and contradictions. 'I don't think that everything in life is logical,' he says.

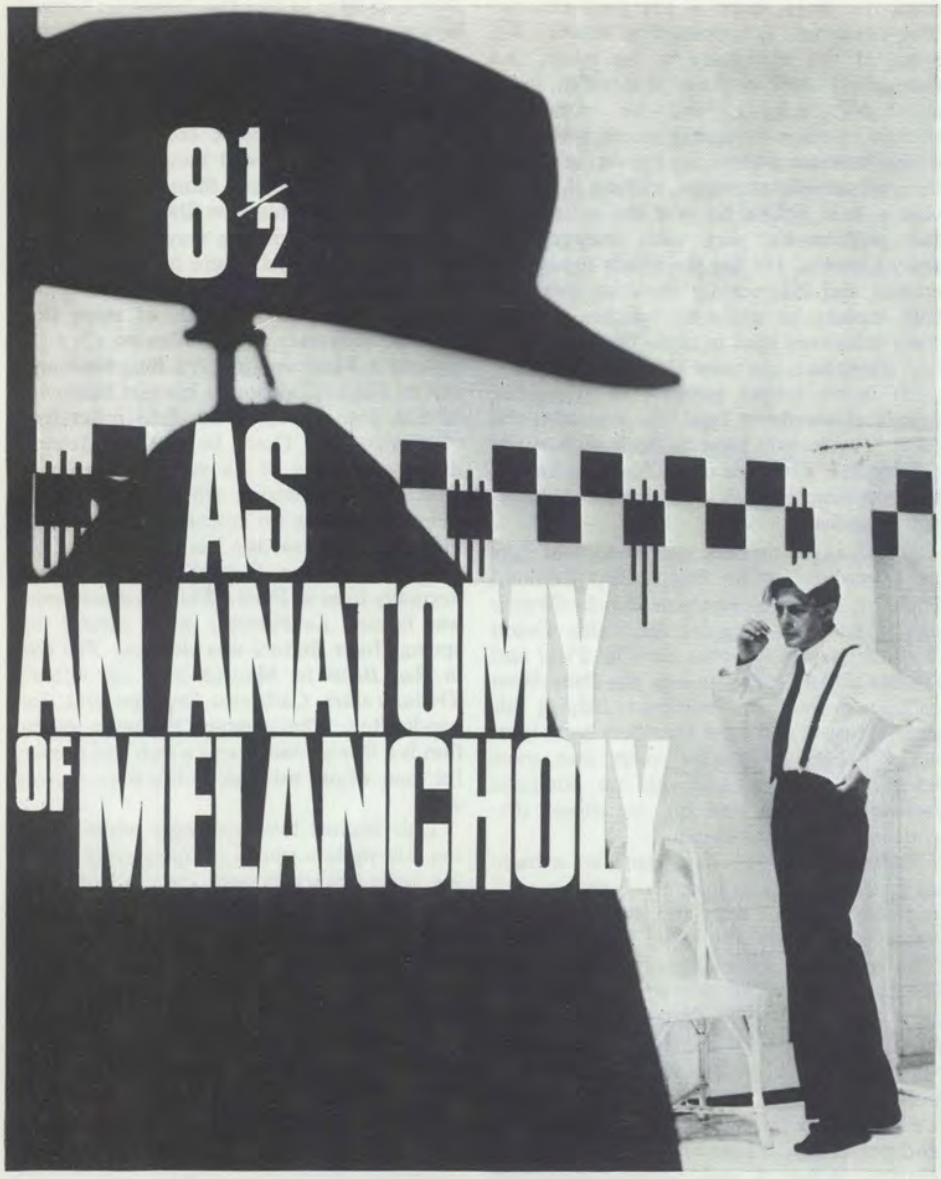
He detests the movie crowd. He rarely goes to the cinema and because he is hard of hearing he sees only films with subtitles. Between making his own films, he lives like a hermit. In Paris, he stays at the same Montparnasse hotel where he and Salvador Dali lived when they prepared *Un Chien Andalou* in 1928. A couple of more permanent addresses are in Mexico City (he became a Mexican citizen a long time ago) and in Madrid, although his real burrow is in San José Purua, a hundred miles west of Mexico City. There, he lives with Jeanne, his French wife of 42 years, his growing deafness, his hunting rifles, and his dog, Tristana. Jeanne no longer comes with him to France because she has lost most of her family; but Juan Buñuel, his eldest son, normally lives in Paris. While Buñuel senior was filming *Le Fantôme de la Liberté* this spring, Juan Buñuel was shooting *The Girl in Red Boots* in Madrid with his father's *Tristana* stars, Catherine Deneuve and Fernando Rey. The younger Buñuel's second film is a fantasy tale about a rich and powerful man whose mission in life is to destroy art.

Luis Buñuel lives sparingly while shooting. He walks a couple of miles every morning before going to work, gets to bed early, and grinningly admits that women are no longer in danger with him. Until he injured a hip taking a bad spill in a swimming-pool a year ago, he swam a couple of lengths every day. His only vices, he says, are seafood and cigarettes. And: 'When you're seventy-four, it doesn't matter of *what* you die, but *how*.'

It seems wrong to say that he is at the peak of his career, because he continues to grow more assured and interesting each time, as well as finding ever widening audiences. Will there be a thirty-second film? 'If he's well and has spent enough time in his mountains in Mexico to get bored,' says Silberman, 'he calls Jean-Claude and the two of them meet somewhere to dream up a new script. *Le Charme Discret* came into being during a walk in Lausanne by Lake Geneva, *Le Fantôme* somewhere in rural Spain.'

The dreams Buñuel has before he and Jean-Claude Carrière sit down with a bottle of *premier cru* and a legal pad will have a definite influence on the new project (before *Viridiana*, Buñuel had a nightmare that ended up on the screen). Dreams, intuitions, and the privileged frontier between sleep and waking have been as much part of the surrealist cult as the taste for scandal, erotic love, magic, alchemy, 'psychic automatism' and coincidence lifted to the power of destiny. With Aragon, Breton, Eluard, Char, Magritte and Arp long since dead, Dali and Buñuel, who landed on the Left Bank almost fifty years ago, are the last survivors of the 'surrealist illumination'.

And both Spaniards are still at work. 'It is easy,' Dali said in April in New York, while unveiling his new 'Hawaiian' paintings, 'because I'm the master.' Buñuel says that everything depends on contexts. 'I shoot, I look, I draw conclusions. The rest is for laughs.' ■



Timothy Hyman

Unlike Truffaut's *Day for Night*, 8½ is not centrally about film-making, any more than it is about the Artist, or even about Fellini himself: it is about much more general processes of experience. The key concept with which this essay will be concerned is that of temperament, and the way the awareness of an inner world affects the language of film. 8½ demonstrated how a film could be about a temperament: the events it dealt with were interior events, and its most important episodes happened outside time, in fantasy, dream and vision. In 8½, Fellini renounced the political or social emphasis of neo-realism, and the new relation between the artist and the outer world that resulted has since become fundamental to much Italian cinema. Guido, groping blindly from within toward his millennial vision, is the blueprint for a new kind of film director, whose ideology originates not in any analysis of society, but in the artist's own constitution. Yet 8½ stands apart from all that has followed, even from Fellini's own subsequent work; and an understanding of 8½ can help us to pinpoint the change in orientation, which has generally been felt to be a 'falling off', not only in Fellini but in Pasolini, Antonioni and Visconti also.

Everyone would perhaps agree that each one of us has a fundamental and recurrent 'pattern', to which his experience largely conforms. I take 8½ to be the description of one such pattern, the mapping-out or 'anatomising' of a particular constitution. In every way, Guido's pattern defines the film; both its structure, since in the course of the film Guido works through one complete cycle of experience; and its subject, because Guido's predicament is shown to be caused by a conflict between his pattern and his conscious self.

8½ is about an inner process which takes place in Guido on several levels, his reaching for artistic potency, for intellectual consistency and for spiritual purity. But Fellini shows Guido's development as occurring, not through his conscious will or intellect, but rather as springing directly from some interior bodily rhythm, to which Guido remains almost passive. His experience is given. While, on the one hand, this view brings us close to a religious or mystical philosophy, with Grace as the key to experience, it also approaches the mechanistic; and this dichotomy is reflected in the language of 8½, which is very direct and physical yet which also tends towards an abstract language, of pattern and interval. The riddling title, *Fellini* 8½, goes far to clarify the film's problem; it points, beyond the opus number, to a fusion of the film's conflicting polarities, not only Life and Art, but physical and abstract, person and pattern—that is to the 'solution', the state of integration momentarily achieved at the end of the film.

'. . . *ce fait de faire un film, c'est-à-dire de raconter ma mélancolie* . . .'—'Entretiens avec Federico Fellini'. Les Cahiers R.T.B. Série Télécinéma, 1962.

Film is the ideal vehicle for the kind of experience Fellini wants to convey here—the sense that every event is subordinate to a prevailing inner rhythm. Film photographs the actual world, yet can present it to us shaped like music. And in film it is a potentially very internal, visceral relation that exists between spectator and artist. As we sit in the darkened space of the cinema, it is as though we were watching images projected upon the dream-screens of our own minds (the mechanism of the shutter echoing our life-pulse). Nietzsche defined art as the 'code tapped out by our nervous systems'; and watching 8½, one is peculiarly aware of film as a 'total art', harnessing enormous and diverse powers so as to bring the spectator into the fullest possible relation with the director's most personal experience.

But in an interview with Gideon Bachmann in 1964, a year after completing 8½, Fellini contended that this power in cinema—the tour de force inseparable from the medium—can only be validated in the context of a clear moral intention:

'In the hands of traditional film-makers, the cinema has become a form of art which allows no space for meditation. . . Films made after a formula, factory films, are of course the maximum point of degradation. But cinema contains in its nature the danger of psychological suggestiveness. It isn't just a meditative form: it is potently naturalistic. A pistol shot in a film is a pistol shot that you hear—boom!—with your ears. All representations of reality in film appear to be objective, but in fact they are co-ordinated to assail the spectator from a definite point of view. It is much more difficult for a film-maker to be sincere than for a writer or painter, because the means he uses are extremely dangerous. They are means—camera, editing, sound, movement—which tend to function directly on the plane of intellectual and psychological aggression. . . Now, when this fantastic power is used for the liberation of the spectator, in other words when it is white magic, it is all right. But when it is used as black magic, it can lead to terrible results.'

Of all Fellini's films, 8½ is the one in which the cathartic intention—the use of the 'white magic' of cinema to 'liberate the

spectator'—is most explicit. The earlier part of the film is an intentional oppression of the spectator, a kind of 'black' magic that is only justified as the necessary preparation for the literally white, liberating vision (the sequence which, as Fellini has emphasised, constituted his 'whole reason for making the film').

Correspondingly, the language in 8½ has an urgency unique in Fellini's work. In *La Strada* or *La Dolce Vita* the script, in *Giulietta* and his subsequent films the sets and costumes, have the central role, which here belongs to the exclusively cinematic means of sequential juxtaposition and rhythm. It is the oscillation of light and dark, the precise length of their duration, which finally shapes 8½; and this music of interval is combined to maximum effect with the actual music of Nino Rota, whose theme tune, an extrovert braying march, transforming into a wistful circling melody, itself incorporates the double rhythm of Guido's experience. The syntax of the film becomes the embodiment of Fellini's doctrine: that our experience is cyclic, that pleasure comes out of pain, true out of false, comedy out of tragedy.

The cyclic structure of Guido's experience is announced at the outset of 8½, in the Crisis, Liberation and Fall, archetypally enacted in Guido's dream. In the sequence immediately following, the cycle is re-enacted in the real world. First, Guido wakes to find himself in a hotel bed, surrounded by intrusive and alien people, a situation which obviously recalls the traffic jam in the dream; then, in the hotel bathroom, at last alone, he experiences a self-awakening, corresponding to his dream flight; and then, exactly as in the dream a rope had tugged him down, so here the buzzing of the telephone intrudes, making him sag into alienation. This sense of a succession of 'corresponding' sequences, with a common pattern, is maintained throughout the film. When Guido entered the hotel bathroom, fluorescent lighting suddenly flickered on, flooding the screen; and the recurrence of this motif, the sudden welling up of light, will give the film its overall continuity.

This pattern, of crisis, liberation and fall, is the key to Guido's behaviour. Just as the necessity of waiting on liberation forces on him his indecisive and conditional manner of action, so the mysteriousness and unreasonableness of his experience enforces his ambiguous ideological stance. He is caught in a machine, yet his moments of liberation seem evidence of a *deus ex machina*. The bleached and dazzling light which floods the screen at moments throughout the film conveys to us not simply Guido's heightened consciousness, but also his sense of an overwhelming but totally mysterious force, at work in an unstable world.

I think that Fellini is being no less than precise when he defines 'this business of making a film' as 'giving an account of his melancholy.' For the pattern of 8½ is that of melancholy; the ambiguous commerce between archetypal and real is typical of that state; and Fellini has himself described the mood of 8½ as 'melancholy, almost funereal, but also resolutely comic.' The tradition surrounding the melancholic is very relevant to Guido.* The melancholic is to be seen, on the one hand, as a sick man, afflicted with a cyclic madness; but on the other, as one singled out to be vouchsafed, at the expense of suffering meanwhile, moments of vision or exceptional power. There is a 'double potentiality in melancholy, for Good or for Evil.'

Now it seems to me that this double potentiality provides the structure of 8½: we are made to see Guido first as a sick man, then as a visionary artist. Guido's crisis, his inability to begin his film, results from his own interpretation of his experience as being fundamentally diseased, false: doubting its validity, he cannot express or reflect it in his art. And because the white episodes (the moments of liberation that are clearly also the inspirations given to Guido as an artist) are inextricably bound up with, are even the product of, his moments of sickness and crisis, he refuses his inspiration as tainted. Fellini's theme can be summed up, that liberation consists in our acceptance of the interdependence of contrary states within our experience; only his failure to accept distinguishes the impotent from the creative individual.

*See *Saturn and Melancholy*, Saxl, Klibansky, Panofsky. (Nelson, 1947). Artists are traditionally melancholic, being 'born under Saturn', the star of melancholy.

First, as a sick man. Fellini makes us not only observe Guido's descent, but also participate in it. The pattern of crisis endlessly repeated soon becomes as alienating for the spectator as it is for Guido. And that initial ambiguity of dimension, of our entering in the middle of the traffic jam of Guido's dream, which we assumed to be reality, persists. Not only do memory and dream, fantasy and reality, slide into one another, but there is also a threat that we are watching, not Guido's immediate experience at all, but merely episodes from the film he hopes to make. What is put before us is not to be trusted; and in such a context Fellini's splendid formal compositions appear grandiose, self-parodying, false. Everything works to confirm the spectator in this view of Guido, as an artist who has lost his way and whose labyrinthine experience will never lead him to the reality he is looking for.

The white episodes continue to well up, like coherent messages from the unconscious, and with their slower rhythm and narrative unity, each offers a momentary respite

Polarities of black and white: the spa sequence, and the rocket launching site

against a present world where consciousness is staccato and fragmented. Each presents Guido with some variant of a visionary reality. First, in a mock vision: Guido's walk in the spa is presented as a burlesque parnassus (to be paralleled later by the burlesque Hades of the underground baths). But in the ASANISIMASA sequence, the most serious of the film, Guido seems to find the authentic 'ANIMA' or soul he has looked for; it is in the sensations of early childhood, the image of a communal society in a condition of love. The intimation is drained of much of its talismanic significance, however, when Guido's fantasy of the Harem takes place in the same primitive or tribal farmhouse, and the child's sacred rituals are knowingly perverted and trivialised by the adult's infantile self-love.

The central part of the film focuses on Guido's attitude to the Church. He first encounters the Cardinal in the hotel lift, and the alternation of darkness and light, as the lift descends past each floor, marvellously conveys Guido's fluctuating faith. Guido's key memory-inspiration proves to be ambivalent. If, at the seminary, the child turned from the saints to Saraghina, yet the dance of the prostitute beside the glittering sea provides an intuition of some primitive or natural worship, leaving him closer to the Church than to her materialist opponents. Inevitably, such ambiguity is condemned, first by the Marxist critic ('You begin intending to renounce, but you end as an accomplice'); then by the Cardinal's attendant, who has read Guido's script and complains that it 'mingles sacred and profane love far too freely.' These sequences end in Guido's fantasy of Hades where, as a shutter comes down, the Cardinal pronounces '*extra ecclesiam nemo salvatur*—outside the Church, no one shall be saved.'

As each alternative fails him, Guido's hope of redeeming his experience comes to reside more and more exclusively in the film he intends to make. Allusions to it were present in his dream, for the film will concern a corrupt and exhausted mankind (that of the traffic jam), and the effort of a few to escape (via the rocket-launching tower, glimpsed by the dreamer in his flight through the clouds) so as to begin a new life on some new planet. Clearly, then, Guido's film is an allegory of his own predicament. His wish to commit his will to the Church, or to his marriage, or to ideal love, is a wish to escape to so many 'new planets', to be liberated once and for all from the wheel of his temperament. This wish is what has defined him, and the making of the film itself is the last remaining hope of its fulfilment; so that his abandonment of it at the press conference really does constitute his personal extinction, the 'suicide' shown us.

Then, as visionary artist. For it is only here, when Guido, in losing each of his alternatives, has been stripped of his ego, that the real protagonist of the film, not the personality of Guido but the fatality of his temperament, is able to assert itself. These final minutes entirely alter our view of what has gone before. Unfurling out of Guido's extinction, the emergence of the vision unifies the film's interior oscillation into a single cathartic motion of crisis transformed to liberation. It is as though the movement of the whole film were to trace out this transformation as a kind of graphological curve; to define the rhythm by which sickness becomes vision.

'But from whence comes this joy of life?' asks Guido, as the white figures first appear. The vision is an affirmation of the temperament, as a creative centre beyond the personality. The white smiling figures walking across the plain; the unveiling of the rocket-launching steps, on which the entire cast of the film are assembled as though they are indeed that remnant, just arrived on that fresh new planet; and the final ritual, by which all these figures form a dancing circle: each of these sequences has its dramatic rightness, in resolving the conflicts established earlier, within a new dispensation.

Once the vision has reaffirmed Guido's integrity, we see that his sliding from dimension to dimension may have been not evasion or confusion, but the necessary completion of a journey towards a view of life that must include several distinct worlds, a 'multiverse'. Saturn was identified with melancholy because its orbit, wider than any other in our system, included all the rest; and it is the principle of inclusiveness that is upheld by Guido. The condition of love embodied in the vision (and confirming the paradisiac experience of childhood) will indeed 'mingle sacred and profane', just as within its circle Communist and Christian, wife, mistress and Ideal, the Cardinal and Saraghina, can link hands. It is in this sense that Guido is right when he declares to Rosella that 'at bottom, I have nothing to say.' It is an experience where meaning is not particular but resides in the unfolding of life itself.

William James, in *Varieties of Religious Experience*, names Melancholy as (with conversion) 'one of the two main phenomena of religion.' The essentially religious nature of 8½ is seen in its structure, which may be likened to the Eucharistic Mass, processing us through various levels of descent, into a realisation of spiritual death; the state where we are most ready to receive Grace, and to partake of the communion (to which the vision clearly corresponds). Guido's spiritual development is shown as fused with the creative process. 'Unless the seed die, it shall not be born again.' At the beginning of 8½, Guido has his seed, his idea of a film; but it is only when he has accepted its extinction that the flowering, the vision which is the true film he has to make, is able to appear. And in this affirmation Fellini's monumental fresco imagery at last finds a content fitting to its epic scale.

Thus 8½ is the 'simple thought' promised to Rosella, a 'film which would help us to bury every dead thing that we carry around in ourselves.' There is an interesting account in Laing's *The Divided Self* of a girl patient whose identification with Gelsomina in *La Strada* was decisive in her recovery of reality. 8½ achieves a similar liberation, but it does so by far more direct and astonishing means; it takes us bodily up in a rhythm, which carries us through catharsis to peace and self-acceptance.

8½ is pivotal in Fellini's work. What had remained implicit in the earlier films, a core of the personality, a certain rhythm of experience, here becomes explicit. In exposing this core Fellini may have said in 8½ all that he urgently had to say. But in subsequent works he has dared to pass so to speak inside this core, into the stifling enclosed world of his temperamental archetypes.*

It is a reversal common to much Italian cinema, the transition from neo-realism to what might be called 'neo-symbolism'. The critic in 8½ is the voice of neo-realism, who regards the subjectivity of Guido's script as evidence that 'Cinema is fifty years behind the other arts.' One can see what he means; the film works by symbols (whiteness, clowns, tower, etc.), and together with the episodic form by which Guido, like Peer Gynt or Baal, enacts a quest for self through various dimensions, it must have seemed to point back to 1910, or beyond.

But in the event, of course, the critic was wrong; the discarded aesthetic has become the new, and the last ten years have seen a general movement in the arts away from the idea that an 'objective' or purist aesthetic alone represents progress. If it affirms anything, our present culture affirms the right to private worlds. The revival of Art Nouveau can be taken with the popularity of writers such as Hesse and Tolkien, and with drug-taking and the art associated with it, as related phenomena; and, whether we like it or not, Italian cinema, which

*Fellini at this time was undergoing analysis by the Jungian, Dr. Bernard.

'. . . *white, smiling figures walking across the plain*'

once stood for an art of social realities, is now a key disseminator of this art of the Fantastic.

In varying degrees, films like *Pigsty*, *The Spider's Stratagem*, *Death in Venice*, *Juliet of the Spirits* or *Blow-Up* explicitly reflect a vision personal to the director. But while the neo-realist aesthetic entailed conflict between documentary and myth, between reality and the director's temperament, the resolution of this conflict in these later films has involved some loss of urgency. To what extent *should* the artist's temperament dominate his material? In an interview given in 1962, the year before 8½ was made, Pasolini admitted that Fellini and he shared a basic affinity of temperament, although his own view was 'societal', whereas Fellini's was 'personalist'. He went on to define this affinity as: '. . . a kind of emotivity, a tendency to see reality always in a fabulous or distorted way. There is a difficulty in submitting to real empirical contact with objects, with what they are, personalities, facts of life. A tendency always to look behind objects . . . '*

At the time that this was written, however, Fellini and Pasolini were still making very different films; and when we compare *Accattone* (1960) with *La Dolce Vita* (1961) this difference is exactly defined by the director's world view, respectively the societal and the personalist. It is only now, many years later, their temperaments fully indulged, that their affinity has become obvious (and not only theirs; Pasolini's words can serve as a description of almost all recent Italian cinema). To indulge the temperament has meant to blur distinctions which may be not more fundamental, but more interesting.

I feel it is significant that these recent films have employed lush colour. It was Fellini himself who had earlier declared that 'colour in film is like breathing under water,' and that 'film is motion, colour is immobility.' The kind of imagery we have come to expect from the masters of cinema, where each frame is individually meaningful, tends in colour to effects of dissociation, which narrow the range of emotion. As in 19th-century symbolism, the artist's sense of unreality threatens to become the sole subject of the work. The static tableaux of *Fellini-Satyricon*, unfolding in a dream space, point towards a completely 'anti-real' cinema. But while, in its incorporation of many modes, *Fellini-Satyricon* can be seen as developing from the 'multiverse' implicit at the end of 8½, what it significantly does not do is to create a structure to reconcile all these modes, or to give them meaning, to close the circle, or to achieve catharsis. And without that catharsis, are we not perilously close to 'black' cinematic magic? By contrast, Guido's vision, although it does assert the triumph of the temperament against any objective 'reality', gains conviction from its difficult emergence out of conflict. It retains some of the tensions of neo-realism; just as it employs the absolute polarities of black and white.

8½ is, in the phrase P. W. Martin coined for Jung and Eliot, an 'Experiment in Depth'; like *The Waste Land*, it descends into a Jungian inner world, seeking some primary contact with experience, so as to return renewed to the outer. In a wider view, it may be that the main movement of Italian cinema will come to be seen in these terms; that finding, like Guido, an impasse in the external world, Italian directors embarked on a 'return inward'. The question then is, when will they re-emerge?

What we have to accept meanwhile is the lack of any glimmer, in a work like *Satyricon*, of wholesome reality. It exists solely, as Fellini says, to 'realise his fantasy'; the inner world is presented not, as in 8½, as part of a process, but as though it were sufficient in itself. The distinction is close to Coleridge's 'Imagination' and 'Fancy'. It was the additional dimension, by which Guido and Fellini were separate, that helped to give 8½ its vitality; as the objectivisation of a temperament, the film could draw on deep levels of dream and fantasy, while remaining still an examination of the external, 'real' world.

Yet while 8½ defines the moment of perfect balance in Italian cinema, the subsequent descent into self, into archetypal realms, has resulted in a kind of profundity. The obvious parallel is with Mannerism; it arouses the same ambiguous responses, and it may, like Mannerism, become more fascinating to future generations, less starved of an art of above ground, and less nostalgic for the achievements of the High Renaissance of cinema that the years of 8½ now seem to represent. Do we see Mannerism positively, as an experiment, a 'return inwards' which initiated the modern era; or do we see it negatively, as the decline of the Italian tradition, a 'failure of nerve'? Do we see Mannerism's concern with the 'dangerous' areas of subject matter as morally courageous (Fellini hoped that even *Satyricon* would be 'liberating'); or do we suspect a search for the bizarre or troubling as a substitute for a less superficial kind of originality?

There is a kind of apostolic succession in Italian cinema; just as the hand of Fellini as assistant is visible in Rossellini's masterpiece *Francis, Jester of God* (1949), so *Francis* is closely echoed in Pasolini's *The Gospel According to Matthew* (1964), which in turn provided an apprenticeship for the young Bertolucci. In this succession, Bertolucci appears rather like the antichrist of the Apocalypse. His films have been the most successful to come out of the Italian tradition in recent years, because he has so dazzlingly exploited the potential for negation in a Cinema of Temperament. Since his subject is Fascism or naked brutal power, his style is integral. The Nietzschean intensity for intensity's sake, the overwhelming physical presence of his people, the gratuitous brilliance and power and beauty of his imagery, are fully at one with his subject. All the signposts, such as the Francis Bacon titles at the beginning of *Last Tango*, or the frequent 'empty' shots, point to the same unambiguous destination. It is a self-knowing, self-reflecting, self-condemning art, where decadence, aestheticism and so forth are all taken into account because the stories all speak about what such attitudes mean in political terms—absurdity, treachery, guilt, violence, death. And if the greatness of Italian cinema meets its death in Bertolucci, it will at least be a death confidently embraced. ■

*In *Entretiens avec Federico Fellini* (op. cit.).

TV Strategies

from page 165

command the largest audiences, and the day will soon come when the networks have to finance their own feature film production or buy on the international TV market for a much higher purchase price than hitherto. This is a situation which has come about because of the relative shortage of revenues accruing to state TV networks.

The annual cinema box-office gross for the whole of the United States is of about the same order as that throughout the whole of the European Community: about $1,200 million a year. The total purchase price for a feature film paid by the TV networks of the European Community as a whole is between one tenth and one twentieth of that paid by the US networks. To finance their own film production, European TV networks must increase their revenues substantially.

The revenue for a TV network may come from licence fees, advertising or programme sales, or any combination of the three. Alternatively, costs per viewing hour may be reduced by repeat screenings or by the exchange of programmes between national networks, thus widening the audience for home originated programmes and screening foreign programmes without charge—apart from translation facilities.

The nature of the international TV market, which is based on money rather than the 'viewing hour', crystallises the view of the TV programme as a commodity rather than a cultural object. In this environment, it is the larger and more lucrative United States market which exerts the dominant pull for non-US programme producers, and which can enable the US producers to market product at a price substantially below that of their overseas competitors. The development of a market based on cultural exchanges negotiated between the broadcasting organisations of Europe would have an entirely different character; but would be unlikely to appeal to the British TV companies, with their strong interest in programme sales to Europe. The alternatives of substantially increasing licence fees across Europe are also likely to seem undesirable to governments, whatever their political persuasion.

The challenge to governments throughout Europe is to find policies for both the film/cinema economy and for television which do not either lay the TV networks wide open to the forces of an international market economy dominated by the United States, or, on the other hand, require governments to bring about a situation where they take both the cinema and TV economies into the public sector and finance and operate them both as a public service. The mixed economy of Europe, in which public sector television and commercial sector cinema have existed side by side since the end of World War II, is beginning to look like an increasingly uneasy compromise. Whether policies can be determined nationally, or whether they must be forged internationally on a European basis by means of programme exchanges and co-productions, is something that remains to be seen. ■

© *Vincent Porter*, 1974

Film REVIEWS

'Lacombe Lucien': Pierre Blaise, Aurore Clément, Holger Lowenadler

Lacombe Lucien

'You shouldn't judge me,' he said, 'it can happen to any of us, losing hold of yourself like that. When you go mad like that, sometimes it lasts a long time, maybe only a month, a year, or maybe the rest of your life. . . Our actions are sometimes inexplicable, they baffle us. There you are, trying to explain to other people, trying to explain to yourself, and it all slips through your fingers as though you were climbing a smooth wall. Your hands, like your mind, just can't get a hold anywhere.'

The words, quoted by Philippe Aziz in *Tu trahiras sans vergogne*, his book on the role of the French Gestapo in Occupied France, are those of a Frenchman who became a valued torturer and hunter of parachutists, and then, motivated by despairing self-disgust, a suicidally courageous member of the Resistance. Thirty-two thousand Frenchmen, the Gestapo planners reckoned, would enable them to police the country to perfection. They got them, and more: a horde of crooks, cops and eminently respectable citizens—many eminent enough to ensure that action against them was stopped, by order, not too long after the Liberation—who saved the Germans a great deal of trouble as an auxiliary force with membership cards, full powers and even uniforms, which enabled the Gestapo in Bourges to number nine Frenchmen to one German; in Marseilles, twenty to one; in Saint-Etienne, thirty to one.

One of these Frenchmen is the seventeen-year-old peasant who gives his name to Louis Malle's *Lacombe Lucien* (Fox-Rank), a hero-villain whom Malle is careful neither to judge nor to justify. His reasons, though, are unequivocally set out in two sequences near the beginning of this equivocal journey we are invited to make up a dismayingly smooth and slippery wall. The first is the opening scene set in a hospital ward in an old people's home, with its discreetly hovering nuns, its one solitary visitor, its murmur of pain and prayer, and of course (this is the Free Zone, June 1944) its portrait of Pétain set reverently on a bedside table, where Lucien (Pierre Blaise) grimly swabs the floor. Even before Lucien turns to the window for escape—and with his catapult coolly shoots a bird singing freely out there in the sunshine—one senses that for him the atmosphere of stagnation and death is all-pervasive.

The second scene is the one in which Lucien, having drifted more or less as a stray puppy into the Gestapo orbit, is taken along for his baptism of fire: the arrest in his elegant mansion of a doctor denounced as a Resistance leader. Only marginally involved, Lucien wanders aimlessly, picking up *objets d'art* in imitation of a connoisseur colleague (who pockets the best pieces), followed curiously by the doctor's young son, and finally finding an object of true wonder in the huge model ship the doctor's son has built, obviously with elaborate and loving care. For a moment the two boys share a secret complicity in their pleasure; then Lucien is given his first lesson in the delicate art of extracting information by a colleague and, watched by the doctor's horrified son, carefully begins to destroy the model, piece by piece.

The theme of haves versus have-nots adumbrated in both these sequences—a motif for collaboration which turns up again and again in the case-histories—is brilliantly orchestrated in the sequence where Lucien finally meets the pale and fragile beauty (Aurore Clément) who will become, in a manner of speaking, the Juliet to his Romeo. Deliberately delayed through two visits by Lucien to the apartment to be measured for a new suit by her father, a Jewish tailor forced to work for collaborators in hopes of earning a passage to freedom, the meeting takes on the tone of metaphor. 'My daughter, France,' says the old Jew; and as the dazzled Lucien, newly kitted-out in his collaborator's uniform of plus-fours, awkwardly responds to the introduction with a stiff 'Lacombe, Lucien,' it is as though he were being called upon to take an oath of allegiance in which the familiar words suddenly have no meaning: *la belle France . . . sale Juive.*

But all through her non-appearance, France has been represented off-screen by an elegant piano solo coming from the room where she is putting in her hours of practice; and it is instantly apparent that the gulf between her culture and Lucien's clodhoppery (surprisingly, much of the film is wryly funny) is absolute. Or rather it would have been, but in the shadow of the Gestapo a sequestered Jewess cannot be too choosy about the only handsome young man to enter her four walls, while Lucien for his part is by no means averse to using his new-found power to 'persuade'. The tragedy of it is that something true, something truly tender, might have grown up between them as each of them grew up. Perhaps, even, it did. But came the Liberation.

Tantalisingly, but wholly satisfyingly, Malle leaves all the questions open. Lucien's watershed, perhaps the end of his 'madness' but certainly the moment when he burns his collaborator's boats, comes when he kills a German soldier to retrieve the gold watch (part of his spoils of war) he had given earlier to France's father. Because the German chiselled him out of it? Because it was valuable? Because it was the last memento of an old man swallowed up by the Gestapo? Who knows, any more than one knows exactly what is running through France's mind, during the romantic idyll of her final flight with Lucien, as she stands gazing down on her sleeping lover with a rock in her hand, and does absolutely nothing.

Using the same calmly assured style which he mastered in *Le Souffle au Cœur* (here the boy's difficult passage out of adolescence is watched over by Django Reinhardt instead of Charlie Parker), Malle rarely raises his voice throughout the film, and the questions asked are questioned again by the very air of quiet, sunlit normality in which the action is bathed. When the awed Lucien is shepherded through the faded grandeur of the hotel which serves as Gestapo HQ, he is reassured by the discovery that his mentor is a boyhood hero, a champion racing-cyclist. When his mother arrives on a visit from the farm, a Gestapo killer anxiously goes out of his way to trace Lucien so that she won't have to go away disappointed ('What a nice young man,' she says comfortably). And the still centre of the whirlpool is glimpsed when Lucien, taking his first tentative steps of exploration in his new home, wanders out into the hall: a cry of pain rings out somewhere in the depths of the hotel; a huge dog sits guard like Cerberus on the staircase but gazes benignly down at the two little girls playing beside it; and in the sound of happy childish laughter, the moment is forgotten.

'It's strange,' says the old Jewish tailor contemplating the boy who is destroying him and his family as casually as he might pull the wings off flies, 'but I can't seem to entirely dislike you.' But the last word, echoing the collaborator-resistant quoted by Philippe Aziz, is given earlier to the alarmingly gaunt, spinsterish Frenchwoman sitting at the Gestapo administrative desk and classifying the letters of denunciation. Two hundred a day, she tells Lucien, some even from a man denouncing himself; and she adds, with just a tinge of bitter accusation—or does one imagine this?—'It's like a disease.'

TOM MILNE

The Last Detail

Nothing in Hal Ashby's two previous films—*The Landlord* and *Harold and Maude*—prepares you for what he has accomplished in *The Last Detail*. *The Landlord* was a pleasant film that surprised you by being better than you expected it to be, mainly because of Bill Gunn's script and some fine acting by Lee Grant and others. *Harold and Maude* was a sort of strange joke. But in *The Last Detail* (Columbia-Warner) Ashby finally finds his groove, and the result is a tight, clean, knowing film that is successful on several levels. It is a film of limited but thoroughly respectable ambitions and it easily fulfils them.

The story, from a novel by Darryl Ponicsan (whose *Cinderella Liberty* was made into a much less interesting film by Mark Rydell earlier this year), is simple and almost mythically pointed. Signalman first class 'Badass' Buddusky (Jack Nicholson) and Gunner's Mate first class 'Mule' Mulhall (Otis Young), two 'lifers' in the navy, are assigned what seems the enviable detail of escorting a lugubriously naive 18-year-old seaman (Randy Quaid) from their base in Norfolk, Virginia to Portsmouth Naval Prison in New Hampshire. It seems the kid has committed the vile crime of (almost) stealing $40 from the polio fund, which happens to be the favourite charity of the base commander's wife. He has been sentenced to eight years in the brig, and Buddusky and Mulhall are issued revolvers and Shore Patrol Sam Browne belts so that they can get this dangerous criminal up to Portsmouth safely.

Badass and Mule are looking forward to rushing him up there in a day or so and using the remainder of the week (and the *per diem* allowances) for their own purposes. As it happens, they move much more slowly than anticipated, since the seaman's raw youth gets to them in ways they would rather not admit and they lose their tough navy hides as they are forced to confront the sublime stupidity of the eight-year sentence. They never say it, but the kid's predicament is clearly a reflection of their own lifeless drudgery in the navy and, by extension, of all working-class treadmill existences. The number of US films that treat working-class life sympathetically and without condescension can be listed (in large block letters) on the back of a time-card. But over the years we have developed the service comedy as a metaphor for that subject. *The Last Detail* fits into a long tradition, therefore, and the tradition gives it some mythical resonances.

Buddusky, Mulhall and the kid make stopovers in Washington (to get the kid drunk), New York (to show him the big city and the world outside the navy that it represents) and Boston (to introduce him to sex). In the process, Buddusky seems to have made it a little clearer to the kid that his excruciatingly passive attitude to the shit the navy hands him is not the best way to live. But neither Buddusky nor Mulhall have the courage to act on their painful knowledge, and when the kid makes a futile attempt to escape after they've had an icy winter picnic in a Boston park, they do what they've been told, recapture him quickly and turn him over to a marine in Portsmouth. The film ends. The main result of having raised the kid's consciousness is, as Mulhall points out, that his eight years in the brig will be just that much more painful. But you hope that the title of the film has some significance and that Mulhall and Buddusky will decide that this really should be their *last* detail.

The storyline of the film doesn't give much of a feeling of the attitudes of the film: these lie almost entirely in the portraits that Nicholson, Young and Quaid paint under Ashby's directtion and, to a lesser extent, in Michael Chapman's cool, flat, coarse-textured photography. Nicholson, who is on-screen in almost every scene, fully understands the tensions that a guy like Buddusky operates under and his Bad-assed navy lifer is a catalogue of anger and fear and the toughness and humour that are necessary to survive. The highpoint of Nicholson's performance in *Five Easy Pieces* has always been for me the scene in which he explodes with over-educated irony at the waitress in the diner. He gives us an equally symbolic explosion of anger in *The Last Detail* when he catches a rednecked bartender in Washington in a little bit of casual racism. The bartender, intent on kicking the trio out, says he'll call the shore patrol—Nicholson's eyes gleam at the opportunity, he whips out his 45, lurches over the bar and exults: 'I *am* the fucking shore patrol, so give this kid a drink, or I'll blow your fucking brains out!' One small battle won—but the war is still going against them and the intelligence of the film doesn't allow for the happy ending that used to be standard in service comedies. *The Last Detail* is a small but therapeutic and nicely wrought blow at the authorities that bartender represents.

JAMES MONACO

The Great Gatsby

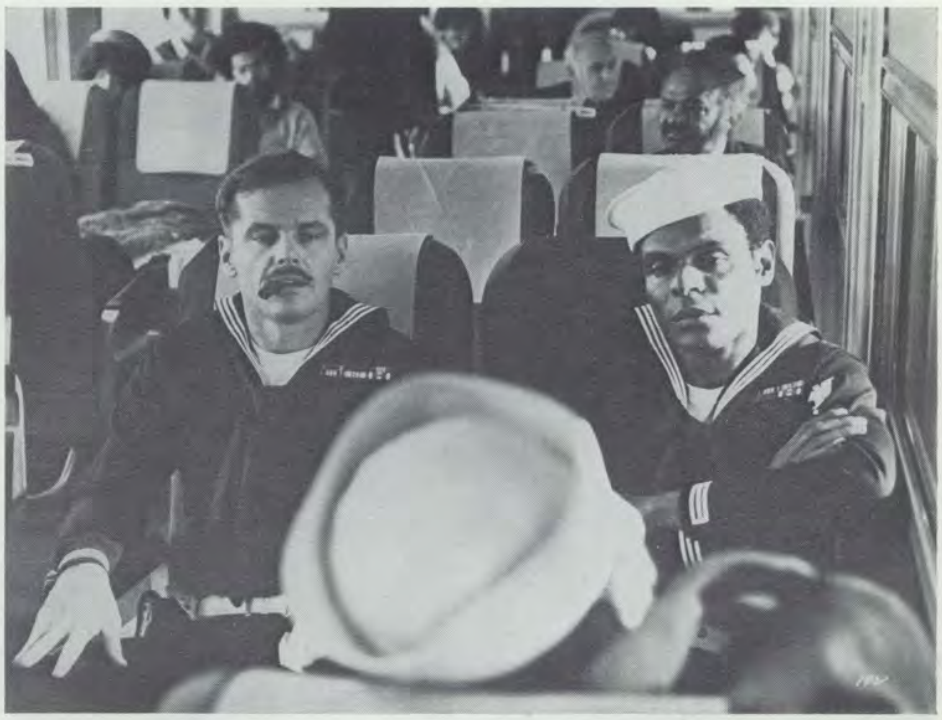
It's rather hard to realise now that *The Great Gatsby* was by no means an instantaneous success. In the first months after publication, Scott Fitzgerald was fretting equally about the royalties and the reviews—Mencken's, he thought, 'had the effect of swinging the expression of opinion from a sort of suspicious bewilderment to a grudging but on the whole deferential bewilderment.' He hankered after his earlier, and one would have thought disastrous title, *Trimalchio in West Egg*. Euphoria about the book's quality alternated with clear-sighted recognition of its weaknesses: the lack of a strong dramatic centre, and the elusiveness of Gatsby himself. 'I myself didn't know what Gatsby looked like or was engaged in,' he had written to Maxwell Perkins before publication.

After almost fifty years, the extraordinary magical aura around the novel looks more or less impregnable, but the flaws remain. The magic is a matter of tone; the flaws a problem of structure. Like Gatsby himself, any adaptation must somehow contrive to communicate 'a heightened sensitivity to the promises of life.' Which is rather a tall order. And without the tone, a fastidious, literally faithful, meticulously concerned and conscientious screen version in a de luxe binding, of the kind essayed by Jack Clayton and Francis Ford Coppola, is likely to run on to the structural weaknesses, the underwater rocks obscured by the glittering blue surface of the prose. Speed could carry the film over them; but this *Great Gatsby* (Columbia-Warner) is not speedy. It embalms the novel rather than attacks it.

But could anyone have hoped to bring it off? For me—and I'm interested to see for Kenneth Tynan also—the work most readily comparable with *Gatsby* is the equally unrepeatable *Citizen Kane*. Both use the infallible form of a mystery (Who was Gatsby? What was Rosebud?) and both introduce their central characters through other people's memories, after tremendous drum-rolls of anticipation. Fitzgerald compressed his study of disenchantment, Welles spread his out in time; but in both cases any depression in the theme is conquered by the abounding exhilaration of the form. More significantly, Fitzgerald and Welles came to their masterworks in a rather similar way. They had pulled off, in their early twenties, spectacular successes accompanied by an *enfant terrible* publicity of notoriety and outrage. Neither, one suspects, would have wanted at that stage to forgo one jot of his reputation. But at the same time these romantic puritans shared a rather Irish instinct for looking on the dark side and for counting the teeth of gift-horses. Perhaps both of them, at that crucial moment when masterpieces were created, would rather have been somewhere else or someone else—would rather have *been* Kane or Gatsby, with all their opportunities still to come. 'I think it would be fun to run a newspaper.' 'You can't repeat the past? Why of course you can.' The excitement in those key sentences keeps the dreams intact.

I don't imagine that Jack Clayton wants to be Gatsby, although one mightn't feel quite so sure about his scriptwriter, Francis Ford Coppola. Certainly, they have never managed to get inside the dream. They circle it, circumspectly and with sympathy, taking their stand with the mildly censorious, mildly indulgent Nick Carraway (Sam Waterston). In the first moments of the picture, Nick is seen jerkily manœuvring a motorboat between West Egg and East Egg—a slightly over-neat scriptwriter's ploy, establishing his role of go-between and showing him as going rather hamfistedly about it. When Nick finally meets Gatsby,

'The Last Detail': Jack Nicholson, Otis Young



Coppola (one assumes) pulls a playful *Godfather* trick in having him escorted to the presence by a gangster aide; an amusing scene, but one would have thought enough to scare Nick out of the house and out of Gatsby's life. The film works Nick and uses him, rather less as the observant conscience than as the provider of concerned reactions. He sweats a lot, even for a hot summer. Gatsby's strange comment, 'In any case, it was just personal,' is beautifully thrown away by Robert Redford; the camera holds on Nick, quivering with perplexity.

Fitzgerald's evasions in *Gatsby* may not have been calculated, but they certainly seem necessary. Part of the book's quality is that it's very short—the tone of elegy and promise is sustained precisely by the form, the evanescence linked to the reader's sense of wanting more. The film, by contrast, is very long, laboriously extending what Fitzgerald elided. No doubt the discreet soft-focus scenes between Daisy (Mia Farrow) and Gatsby—the old army uniform, the slow dance in the empty room—capture all too clearly Gatsby's romantic ideal. But we don't want reminding, however accurately, that the immaculate dream is only at heart a shopgirl's novelette. And there is more stretching when it comes to the shooting, with Wilson (Scott Wilson) shuddering over the trigger while a curtain blows beautifully to and fro in front of him. Fitzgerald's laconic narrative stresses the accident, where this scene over-stresses the intent.

But in the long run, the film is not so much the sum of its parts as the sum of its props: tunes, clothes, hair styles, the yellow Rolls-Royce, Gatsby's shirts, his pink suit, his hairbrushes, his swimming-pool. Gatsby's particular dream of re-creating the past becomes submerged in the movie's dream of re-creating the 1920s, for an audience supposedly avid for nostalgia. It isn't the film's fault, and yet it certainly isn't against the tone of the film either, that labels like 'the Gatsby look' are so readily attachable. And, significantly, the one unequivocal success among the performances seems to me to be that of Howard Da Silva, whose beautifully played and directed scene as Wolfshiem gains enormously from the feeling that he isn't re-creating anything but is simply alive and there. Interestingly, Da Silva played Wilson in the gangster *Gatsby* of a quarter of a century ago. One's memories of this undeniably wrong-headed version are very dim—Betty Field reclining in white on a white sofa, Shelley Winters making scenes, bootleggers shooting up a warehouse. But Alan Ladd, simply by imposing his own secretive star presence, perhaps made more of Gatsby than Robert Redford, whose stylish attempts to play the character falter on the elusiveness of what is there to be played.

Clayton and Coppola have obviously tried very hard, in an area where to be seen trying is to fail. One small instance is a scene towards the end, when Gatsby comes to Nick's cottage. We see, for the first time, a staggering view, down over deep green forests to Long Island Sound. 'I was wondering,' says Nick (or words to that effect), 'what those old Dutch sailors must have felt . . .' For a half-instant one waits for him to go on: man compelled into 'an aesthetic contemplation he neither understood nor desired, face to face for the last time in history with something commensurate to his capacity for wonder.' Coppola has not taken leave of his senses, and the words of course remain unspoken. But the first half of the idea is pointless without the hyperbole of its conclusion. Fitzgerald, in that final section of the novel, was raising his sights to a continent. On the screen, Nick is looking at a view—and one which, to be irritatingly pedantic, shouldn't rightly be there, since the trees that 'once pandered in whispers to the last and greatest of all human dreams' have been cleared to make way for houses such as Gatsby's. A scene so almost touchingly wrong, and so persevering in its attempts to do right, can stand for this *Gatsby*.

PENELOPE HOUSTON

Sleeper

'I'm a hand man,' says Miles Monroe, shying away from the automated delights of the Orgasmatron. 'I don't like moving parts not my own.' Neither, of course, does Woody Allen himself. His four features as writer-director-star are characterised by their lonely rebellions against social conventions or political systems—and their allies, tyrannical machines. But they are almost equally distinguished by the extent of Allen's creative control, unusual in Hollywood; his contract with United Artists gives him exclusive right to the final cut. Therein lies a paradox: Allen applies his hard-won independence and control to projects that celebrate attacks on the very idea of control. More than any movies since the heyday of the Marx Brothers, his are battlefields, struggles for dominance between the discipline of narrative form and the anarchy of unrelated gags, verbal and visual. His visual styles are functional, but serve the gag rather than the plot; he has explained the generally static camera of *Bananas* as a reaction against the tracking shots that tended to muffle or displace the gags in *Take the Money and Run*. Only in the consummate final episode of *Everything You Wanted To Know About Sex* (which dramatised the inner workings of a weary male body straining to sustain phallic erection and achieve emission) has he found a structuring concept strong enough to allow his gags, however random their targets, to mesh together. Elsewhere, geared to humour for its own sake, he stands on his sheer individuality. Strikes, swipes and misses, his inventions and the movies that contain them are idiosyncratically his.

Sleeper (United Artists) is a semi-concerted attempt to harness his energies to a theme. The plot once again confers a circumstantial heroism on the ever-tarnished Allen persona, this time in the context of American society two hundred years hence, after the nuclear war. Miles Monroe, erstwhile jazz clarinettist and co-proprietor of the Happy Carrot health-food store on Bleeker Street, is revived from an accidental cryogenic immersion in the year 2173 by a group of conspirators who need a non-classified agent to join them in overthrowing the totalitarian regime in power. Their predominantly middle-class society is served by humanoid robots, 'protected' by ubiquitous military police, and governed by The Leader—a remote figure always seen iconically, in a wheelchair on a clifftop at sunset, faithful alsatian at His side, haloed by circling gulls. Miles is quickly shaken out of his natural cowardice by the need for self-preservation. Evading the police, he masquerades as a household robot and then kidnaps his poet owner Luna (Diane Keaton) to force her to lead him to the guerrilla outpost. He is eventually captured, but not before exposure to police methods has radicalised Luna; she goes on alone to join the guerrillas, and later returns to restore the neuroses to Miles' 'electronically simplified' brain. Reunited, they spearhead an attack on The Leader, only to discover that an earlier attempt had been largely successful: The Leader survives only in the form of His unattached nose, from which the authorities are hoping to reconstruct His entire person by means of a 'cloning' procedure. Miles kidnaps the nose, crushes it to pulp in an accident, and settles down to the arduous business of relieving Luna of her revolutionary fervour.

Much of the time, the result is Allen's most Tashlinesque movie, an almost maintained satire on American *mores* through a gleeful parody of a genre at least as old as Rip Van Winkle. The gag spectrum is comprehensive: social (the radical Luna reminds Miles of an old flame who was a Trotskyite, became a Jesus Freak, and was arrested for selling connect-the-dots porno books), political ('That's de Gaulle, he was a famous TV chef . . . Norman Mailer, he donated his ego to Harvard Medical School . . . Bela Lugosi, he was mayor of New York'), cultural (Luna's new poem sends one of her admirers into transports of delight—'It's obviously influenced by McKuen'), religious (confession and absolution have been automated; a 1990 *New York Times* headlines the birth of twins to the Pope's wife). There are incandescent moments of synthesis: during his getaway Miles comes upon a 200-year-old Volkswagen—which starts first time—still bearing its 'Register Commies Not Guns' sticker. There is a natural vein of Jewish humour: Luna and the guerrillas act out scenes from Miles' early domestic life to jog his memory—'Stop whining and eat your *schiksa*.' Curiously, the regime's

'Sleeper': Woody Allen

mind control is associated with sex changes: after treatment, Miles wins a beauty contest as Miss Montana, and later launches into a flawless Blanche Dubois routine. Most of this is written comedy. Allen leavens it with slapstick interludes, accompanied by ragtime jazz, which include devoted re-creations of classic routines. Miles slips on the world's largest banana skin, dangles perilously just out of sight of two oblivious guards, fights off an aggressive instant pudding mix under the noses of Luna's equally oblivious house-guests; and the slapstick get-aways feature the movie's sole running gag—a police bazooka that consistently backfires.

The focus for all of this, and the element that lends the generally bland tone a cutting edge, is the customary emphasis on Allen's sexual embarrassment and frustration. The modest toy-like settings (Allen's evocation of the future echoes Truffaut's in *Fahrenheit 451*), matched by the frigid, institutionalised sex-games of Luna's friends, provide a disturbingly neutral context for Miles' perennial sexual anxieties. 'Would you like to perform sex with me now?' asks Luna. 'I don't think I'm up to a performance,' says Miles, 'maybe we could rehearse.' 'It's strange to think that you haven't had sex for 200 years,' is her next gambit. '204, if you count my marriage,' comes the wan rejoinder. The dogged masochism falls into place in the peculiarly dour punch line. Confused by Miles' rejection of politics, science and religion alike, Luna asks him what he does believe in. 'Sex and death,' comes the reply, 'and after death at least you don't feel nauseous.' The character's rebellion suddenly takes on the darker colouring of misanthropy. This final twist is the movie's true idiosyncrasy, and it informs the rest of the action retrospectively. It's as if the anarchic tendencies represented a conscious infantilism, contrived specifically to keep the bleak perceptions of maturity at bay.

TONY RAYNS

Kid Blue

The soundtrack ballad that accompanies Kid Blue as he forsakes the badlands and enters the quietly burgeoning little town of Dime Box, Texas, might be a reprise of the pastiche folk tune that sped Jeremiah Johnson towards the Rockies and a legendary future (both songs were composed by Tim McIntire and John Rubinstein). Although the two heroes are travelling in opposite directions, they both have the romantic halo of fugitives from civilisation, and both films opt—like their title songs—for the *faux-naif* tone of a folk tale that scarcely disguises, and is scarcely meant to, the built-in perspective of a hundred years of history. Where Sydney Pollack pulled Johnson through by increasing his stature, adding layers of myth until the man at last seemed of a size with the majestic mountainscapes, Kid Blue has an altogether narrower escape, and director James Frawley takes the more difficult course of rendering the mythic contest with encroaching civilisation a progressively more homely, small-scale affair, a domestic rearrangement of the landscape.

Hints of larger allegories are tidied away quite casually, and a little dauntingly, in the pre-credits sequence. A train hold-up led by Bickford Waner, otherwise known as Kid Blue, comes comically unstuck when one of the gang loses his balance and crashes to the ground before the rest have the time, or the ingenuity, to do anything about the rapidly disappearing train. The failure prompts morose reflections over the camp fire that night, especially when Bickford announces that he is giving up his life of crime (after all, his takings wouldn't amount to 'a pile bigger'n a midget could jump over,' as he later confesses, echoing the recent tradition of underprivileged banditry from *Butch Cassidy* to *Judge Roy Bean*) and that he intends to seek

'Kid Blue': Dennis Hopper

a job. 'Somebody's liable to know Kid Blue down that road, Bickford' is the farewell warning of one of the gang as the Kid sets off for Dime Box; and it seems as inevitable that he will follow the tradition and 'die bloody' as that Dennis Hopper, long hair tucked peevishly under his hat as he struggles with his first job as lackey in the barber's shop, will soon be the butt of the good citizens' fierce sense of decency, stiffly personified by Sheriff 'Mean John' Simpson (Ben Johnson).

But one of the ironies of *Kid Blue* (Fox-Rank) is that no one ever knows Bickford—except for his old accomplice, prostitute and fellow outsider Janet Conforto (Janice Rule)—to be anything other than a disreputable malcontent, hardly more dangerous than the three down and out Indians with whom he teams up. Effectively playing against the grain of 'Easy Rider out West' Hopper portrays the persecuted maverick as a man quietly suffering the chafes and binds of an insidious respectability; and his eventual ramshackle rebellion has the style of an aggrieved eccentric finally breaking away from a family code. With its whimsically knowing air, *Kid Blue* displays its contemporary ambience more openly than other current Westerns; it asserts a breeziness and flippancy about such bush-fire rebellions against authority and convention, and its marked similarity to *Steelyard Blues* is most evident in the self-mocking trick by which the ragamuffin heroes turn super-hero (Peter Boyle's John Wayne transformation at the end of Myerson's film, Kid Blue's freeze-frame farewell). The doomed romanticism of Peckinpah, Huston, Roy Hill *et al*, is reserved for the death of the Indian, Old Coyote, who after joining in the Kid's scheme to steal a payroll turns happily to tilting at the capitalist windmill of the Great American Ceramic Novelty Company, indulging a last war-painted charge against the posse.

With the film centred on none too substantial allegory, Frawley successfully cements the whimsy and the poetry with a rare attention to detail in the life of Dime Box itself, emphasising both the family closeness and the bustling hostility which binds people together in this cradle of capitalism in the Far West—and incidentally trumping *Steelyard Blues* and its rather graceless shifts from just plain allegory to just plain whimsy. Frawley is particularly adept at juggling the moods of community scenes, from the boarding-house dinner at which a drummer first pronounces on the great boon of the new factory, then upbraids Bickford for his heathen ways, to the revival meeting at which Preacher Bob (Peter Boyle) enjoins the congregation, 'Don't let your hearts be sickened with this modern strife,' and the enthusiastic praises of the Indians at the back chime in discordantly with the answering amens (the Indians' religious fervour, it turns out, derives from their belief that as 'children of God' they will have their lands restored to them). Embracing Bickford as the unassimilated outsider are the two men whose acceptance of the factory fairly covers the spectrum of community feeling: the hellfire preacher who has chosen to drop out, knocking back pills ('my brain medicine') while devising a flying machine that will 'make us like angels'; and Reese Ford (a beautiful performance by Warren Oates), the factory worker who befriends Bickford out of his fondness for the ways of the ancient Greeks, including their ideal of friendship, and makes the resigned comparison, 'That sure is different from what we've got now—we sure do have to work for a living.'

Lightly indulging the overt fable for our times, and keeping a sufficient comic distance from its symbolic import, *Kid Blue* works out its own pixilated fable on the fate of frontiers, making sense while making mock of all the symbols, from Preacher Bob's 'aerocycle' to the vision of an industrial Moloch that rises up when Hendricks, owner of the Company, with a grand flourish introduces Bickford to the blast furnace that he will feed as his first job in the factory: 'You, Waner, are going to be a vital member of that family. Welcome.'

RICHARD COMBS

Dillinger

'If this story is not the way it was,' John Milius wrote by way of preface to the published script of *The Life and Times of Judge Roy Bean*, 'then it's the way it should have been and furthermore the author does not give a plug damn.' Forewarned is forearmed, so there is no sense in complaining that *Dillinger* (EMI), which Milius both wrote and directed, plays fast and loose with several facts about the deaths of Baby Face Nelson and Pretty Boy Floyd so as to make a tidy end to the Dillinger gang; or—except that it leads to mood pieces rather too reminiscent of *Bonnie and Clyde* and *Bloody Mama*—in remarking that it paints the character of this notoriously obsessional killer with a

benevolently romantic glow. 'I never killed anybody in my life,' protests Dillinger (the admirable Warren Oates), 'I just steal money.' And his heroic status is consecrated by quietly nostalgic scenes in which he enjoys himself at a country hoedown (an echo here of *My Darling Clementine*), visits the folks back home, takes his girl out for an idyllic afternoon of boating.

If Milius is after any kind of obsession here, it is the obsessional myth-making which underlies his scripts for *Evel Knievel*, *Jeremiah Johnson* and *Judge Roy Bean*. The pre-credits sequence is a robbery in which Dillinger, framed for posterity within the bank-teller's window, proudly announces 'You've been robbed by the Dillinger gang; that's the best there is!' Then, as an afterthought with an edge of challenge, he adds, 'This could be one of the big days in your life, don't make it your last.' The twist from *Bonnie and Clyde* is that although Dillinger is perennially preoccupied with appearance ('I got a bank to rob. How do I look?' a gang-member asks his girl), he is secure in his reputation, and it is the FBI chief Melvin Purvis (Ben Johnson) who feels impelled to take up the challenge—and prove himself the greater myth—in a scene which wittily paraphrases the ceremonial assumption of papacy in Brecht's *Galileo*. Faced with the task of ferreting out a lone (and somewhat hangdog) killer who has holed up in an isolated farmhouse with a girl hostage, Purvis calls for his bullet-proof vest, his gloves, his six-guns and—since both hands are occupied—a cigar in his mouth which is duly lit; then, in full majesty as a Hoover lawman, he stalks into the farmhouse, kills the desperado, and emerges with the maiden in his arms to a chorus of admiring headlines from the assembled press.

The irony which Milius exploits throughout is that the ultimate myth-makers, the public, know that robbers have charisma and cops don't. Freeze any frame in the film and the good guys, perfectly legitimately, look like hoodlums and vice versa. Nothing, not even the great day when Machine-Gun Kelly inadvertently coins the G-Man label for Purvis to exploit, can alter the relative values of their images. These are hard times, as we are reminded not only by the inevitable 'We're in the Money' on the soundtrack but by the willingness of honest citizens to take advantage of any pickings that come their way; and the public eyes with envy—affectionate rather than malicious—the freebooting exploits of gangsters who refuse to accept the inevitability of the Depression. Milius clinches the point, with neat Carroll logic, during the hoedown, where the sheriff who captures Dillinger explains how he recognised the gang by pointing to their girls, their clothes and their joie de vivre: 'Decent folks don't live that good.'

The fault of the film is that Milius seems unable to resist putting everything in, so that the richly evocative atmosphere becomes overloaded. In addition to all his other preoccupations—and these include generous portions of violence in the admirably staged shoot-outs—he includes a random selection of old photographs and newsreel clips, he indulges a rapturous Vorkapich, he drops a good few names too many, he pursues the byways of Purvis' career at the risk of losing sight of Dillinger, he tries to graft a 'FBI Casebook' packaging on to the film, and he even indulges in theatrical slow-motion for the grand finale of Dillinger's death outside the Biograph Theatre. All rather endearing distractions, however, and mostly kept enough at bay by the overall wit of Milius' conception to make his debut as a director one to relish.

TOM MILNE

Having seen an uncut version of Dillinger *after writing this review—the print shown to the press was mysteriously shorn (censorwise, though apparently not by the censor) of several key scenes—I withdraw my reservations. The cut scenes, implying the suppression of the myth through the ruthless extermination of the gangster, and the birth of a new one in a shot of an onlooker reverently dipping her handkerchief in Dillinger's blood, clarify and justify Milius' magpie structure in the film.*—T.M.

Blazing Saddles *and* S*P*Y*S

Tradition has it that the Western is a well-nigh impossible form to parody successfully, while the spy cycle from its inception has seemed so close to self-mockery that a whole sub-genre of espionage spoofs has tended to look redundant. Neither *Blazing Saddles* nor *S*P*Y*S* is quite original enough to outdistance these respective curses, though both are capable of manic bursts of speed which occasionally suggest that they might. What they most evidently have in common (apart from a streak of worried Jewish humour about minority groups and underdogs) is a kind of ungainliness—variously lopsided approaches to their material. *Blazing Saddles* is the more wayward in content, using its Western locale as a loose excuse for diverse comedy-revue turns, but remaining visually uninventive. *S*P*Y*S* wheels out a disappointingly trite plot, but manages to make up ground on points of style.

For a movie making hay with such perfectly cinematic material as the Western, *Blazing Saddles* (Columbia-Warner) is dismayingly graceless. Rather like a cruder Woody Allen, Mel Brooks sets up each pastiche gag with a bubbling theatricality, but leaves the film to haul along leadenly between numbers. Bold blood-red and corn-yellow credit titles zoom up over a bleached Technicolor prairie while Frankie Laine belts out a title song extolling the hero's blazing saddle as a beacon of justice; in the threatened town of Rock Ridge, the feckless citizens gather in church *High Noon*-fashion to be given a less than uplifting sermon and an impassioned but incomprehensible true-grit harangue, in 'authentic frontier gibberish', by old-timer Gabby Johnson; and for the first half of the film, Gene Wilder provides a tremulously bleary-eyed imitation of Dean Martin trembling through *Rio Bravo*.

The disappointment is that none of the one-off buffoonery—either Wilder's dipso gunman or Cleavon Little's luckless pawn of a black sheriff, running his own gamut of imitations from Roy Rogers to Bugs Bunny—ever works to a cumulative effect. The patently 'show-biz' style and outrageous humour score most effectively when most disciplined by a set-piece format; and it is probably no accident that the best scene is a variation on the 'Springtime for Hitler' extravaganza of *The Producers*, with Madeline Kahn in a show-stopping number as a Western saloon singer, prowling the stage as a sultry combination of Dietrich and Mae West, quipping to one agog spectator with his hat in his lap: 'Is that a ten-gallon hat, or are you just enjoying the show?' Unfortunately, given the way the film revels throughout in its theatrical staging, the one escalated joke comes out as a gratuitous development and a dribblingly ineffective conclusion: as hordes of good guys and bad guys wrestle through Rock Ridge, the entire cast ends up crashing through an adjacent set on the Warners backlot, and then dispersing into Hollywood, where a final gun-down takes place in front of Grauman's before our hero and his sidekick adjourn to the cinema to watch the end of their movie.

The disappointment of *S*P*Y*S* (EMI) is that although it works hard to create a stylish mélange of everything that is most familiar from the genre, and has the added fillip of the richly boisterous teamwork of Elliott Gould and Donald Sutherland, it still seems inescapably, and also quite repetitiously, just another late straggler from the genre. Its working title—*Wet Stuff*—is a better indicator to its intention of doing for the spy film what *M*A*S*H* did for the war film. 'People bleeding all over the place because he wants a car and a suede jacket,' mutters indignant CIA man Douglas Griffin (Elliott Gould) after a particularly abortive mission to pick up a defecting Russian gymnast. The two Americans approach the Russian posing as a newsreel team, only to be crossed by British agents using a similar cover, and the *contretemps* ends with the phoney cameras pumping real bullets. The superbly orchestrated confusion of the scene, ricocheting between the blood and the buffoonery, is the keynote of the film; successive scenes, unfortunately, do little but repeat the trick.

Irvin Kershner seems to have compensated for a thin script by turning the film into an overdriven exercise in style, screwing up the

'Dillinger': myths of cops and robbers. Ben Johnson as Chief Purvis

confusion and farce with frantic camera movement. He is most successful at making something of his own out of the scenes in the student anarchists' *atelier*, emphasising an emotional volatility which escalates through domestic chaos into ramshackle political protest. But the students remain essentially caricatures, a fate from which Kershner, for all his skill with actors, is unable to save a good many of the characters. The by-play between Sutherland and Gould, taking off from but not bound for very long to the script's distinction between Brulard (Sutherland) as a faithful company man and Griffin as the maverick, takes on a life of its own and remains apart from the bustle which too often seems to be camouflaging very little in the rest of the film.

RICHARD COMBS

Bof!

'Bof' in French is a kind of verbal shrug, usually accompanied by a real one. It precisely describes the mood of Claude Faraldo's second film (made before *Themroc*), a reverie of contentment which glances at the darker side of things without raising an eyebrow. Murder, ménage à trois, then à quatre, hard and demeaning labour—none of these evokes alarm, anger or resentment. Subtitled 'Anatomy of a Delivery Boy', *Bof!* (The Other Cinema) might more accurately be called 'Anatomy of Happiness'.

The film opens, uncharacteristically, with a visceral examination of the first day at work of a wine delivery boy. We watch him taught—with some contempt—to drive a scooter, pack crates, and heave them on to his shoulder. We see him on his first delivery, sweatily staggering up eight flights of stairs. He is met by a handsome woman in a dressing gown, who willingly accedes to his advances—the first intimation of the film's real flavour. A pretty girl in a shop window obligingly spreads her legs for the boy to see: he marries her. His mother dies without much grief from anyone; he is promoted to driving a lorry by the good fortune of a drivers' strike; his father retires ten years early, and after a day spent wandering about asks his son if he can live with him and share his wife. Son and wife readily agree, and the favour is reciprocated when the father picks up a beautiful young shoplifter and takes her home with him. Nothing disturbs the peace, even the father's confession that he murdered his wife on his son's wedding day. After the son's friend, a black street-cleaner, has joined the ménage, the happy family leaves for the South, where they are last seen wandering along a river bank. Perfect happiness is shrugging off those little local difficulties which oppress the unhappy majority.

'Bof!': Paul Crauchet, Julian Negulesco

Bof! is a fable, a kind of child's game of 'What if . . . ?' What if there were no jealousy or guilt and we could all do as we pleased? In this game there are no real people; with the exception of the wife, none of the characters is named. Similarly, they are barely delineated, except by function. The son (Julian Negulesco) is a son, worker, lover and husband, the wife (Marie Dubois) a mistress and housekeeper, the girl a girl who steals. . . Only the father (Paul Crauchet), through the decisions we see him take—to leave his job, share his son's wife, murder his own—emerges as a character in any conventional sense. What dialogue there is in the film is simple and banal, and emotions are expressed through gesture and silence. Like Ferreri in *Dillinger is Dead*, Claude Faraldo is concerned with people simply doing things, often alone, observed by a notably self-effacing camera: the son enjoying the countryside beside his lorry, the father on a walk, the wife humming to herself as she moves round the flat. The murder and the many sexual diversions are bypassed, as Faraldo concentrates instead on the changes they bring about in the household routine. Father climbs into bed with son's wife as son leaves for work, and kisses both goodbye; father brings daughter-in-law breakfast in bed; wife wakes husband, in bed with the shoplifter.

It is as though Faraldo, an ex-worker himself, had wanted to make a film about the working man's lot but found himself diverted, much as the son is, to sexual fancies. The pointers to a more polemical film are there: the physical emphasis of the opening scene, angry strikers in a locker room, the views of time clocks, factory gates and lunches snatched in cellars or by the roadside, often intercut with scenes of the other characters enjoying their indolence. But the time of the film, and the sense of its bright, primary colours, is summer. Where in *Themroc* these symbols of oppression were noted as such, here they are passed off with a shrug, with reverie rather than revolution. The diminished dialogue and characters of *Bof!* are both blueprints for *Themroc's* total absence of language or real character; but where the revolution of *Themroc* is forced and confused, the happy fantasy of *Bof!* is easy and natural. In *Bof!*, Faraldo's apparent preoccupation with sexual rather than political revolution wins out. And it is somehow a more honest film—slight, but asking no more than to be taken at its own evaluation.

VICTORIA RADIN

Cannes 1974

from page 144

The Kluge film is a left-wing, *Candide*-like parable of a housewife who performs abortions to pay for her children's clothing and schooling (!) while her grumpy husband continues his studies. Eventually, she is denounced by a rival abortionist, and decides to use her energy in social and political causes. By this time, the husband has got a job; which she promptly loses for him by her political agitation. The character of the wife—played by the director's sister, Alexandra Kluge, whom we saw in his first film *Yesterday Girl*—is a touching mixture of naivety and persistence: the film ends with her running a sausage stall, but each sausage is wrapped in a political tract. The film is amazingly *cheerful*, an unusual and rather endearing quality in a political work. True, the actual abortion scenes are very disturbing, but the total effect was still pleasantly tonic.

The same could be said about the Rivette film—although I was more interested in its 'serious' parts than in the comedy scenes, which were for me a little too redolent of what I imagine goes on in girls' dormitories after lights out. The film's English title is *Phantom Ladies of Paris*, and if that evokes Feuillade, it's no accident. Julie is a librarian, Céline a magician, a White Rabbit who leads our Julie/Alice right through the looking-glass into a world of her imagination. Céline is constantly inventing stories about the people she sees, and sometimes they come true. Like the one about the widower and his daughter and the two mysterious women who are after him. First Julie becomes convinced of the reality of the story, and then, when the characters materialise before our eyes, we do, too. This film within a film is loosely based on an early story by Henry James, and is totally absorbing, even though it never reaches its conclusion. By that time, indeed, Céline and Julie are actually participating in this rather sombre drama, but the film ends on a non-narrative pirouette.

With *Out One/Spectre* and now *Phantom Ladies*, Rivette has more than justified his role as grey eminence of the new cinema; acclaimed by Godard and Straub as their '*maître à penser*', he is at last coming into his own as a full-time film-maker: *Phoenix* is due to start shooting this summer.

The 1974 Cannes Festival will probably go down in history for having rejected for the main competition both the Rivette and the Bresson, and for leaving *Stavisky* out of its prize list.

RICHARD ROUD

BOOK REVIEWS

BERGMAN ON BERGMAN

By Stig Björkman, Torsten Manns, Jonas Sima

Translated by Paul Britten Austin

SECKER AND WARBURG, £4.20 (Paperback £2.10)

It is no small testimony to the tolerance and self-control which he claims to have attained rather late in his career that Ingmar Bergman should—between June 1968 and April 1970—have given up some fifty hours of his life to being interviewed by the editorial triumvirate of the Swedish film magazine, *Chaplin*. Battering away with all the sensitivity of a bulldozer in a china shop, they are inflexibly determined to file and label not just Bergman's methods but their own: Björkman sticks ruggedly to a formalist approach, Sima to structural analysis, and Manns to questions of social context which lead him, but not his subject, into the murkier waters of symbolism, leitmotifs and autobiographical factors.

As the book progresses (and its thirteen sessions are presented out of the sequence in which they actually occurred), one begins to understand Bergman's celebrated reluctance to speak to the press, and to admire his patience in deflecting the same questions over and over again. Although he frequently resorts to irony, on only one occasion—after Manns has endeavoured to classify the child-motif in four types—does Bergman really lose his temper. ('You've given me a lecture. Give me a concrete question.')

Yet, angry or amused, Bergman is immovable when it comes to discussing topics which he views as either irrelevant or uninteresting. His firmness is seldom without charm. Bergman emerges less as the authoritarian ogre who has grown unused to contradiction than as a complex and vulnerable person who has arrived at a philosophy for survival through many painful trials and errors, and at self-knowledge through much agonised heart-searching, and who is damned if he's going to start picking the scabs off any of his nearly healed wounds. In this, as in other areas, he shows a surprising degree of practical good sense.

Indeed, much of the book's fascination lies in the glimpses it affords us into the practical side of Bergman's nature. Money looms larger than metaphysics in most of his textual glosses. The defects of *Night Is My Future* are explained by the fact that he was 'working like a galley-slave to support two families'; *It Can't Happen Here*, the only film which he ever made entirely for money or has entirely disowned, was a desperate attempt to support three families and six children; *Smiles of a Summer Night* was conceived as a commercial success to counteract the box-office disaster of *Journey into Autumn*; *The Devil's Eye* was the price he had to pay for making *The Virgin Spring* (which he now dismisses as 'a lousy imitation of Kurosawa'). Failure comes cheap in neither art nor love, and during the film strike of 1951 Bergman fed his many dependent mouths by making nine costume-piece commercials for a deodorant subsidiary of Sunlight Soap, exercising all his ingenuity to fit a lengthy catch-tune about sweat and bacteria into every 34 metres of film. (Out of this period of despair came another frayed marriage and the bitter-sweet scenario for *Waiting Women*.)

The astute accountant also reveals an unexpected passion for hardware—from the first, much celebrated projector which he got from his older brother as a swap for his lead soldiers, to the Arriflex and Nagra which he bought himself after *Fårö Document*. He can seldom be diverted into discussing the spiritual nuances which form the subject matter of so many of his films, but he expatiates upon his experiments with Sven Nykvist to reproduce the exact qualities of real light by artificial means (*Winter Light*), and insists that he derives a sort of erotic pleasure both from editing and from 'frolicking about on the sound-track.' Embarrassed by his interviewers' attempts to establish him as an intellectual, he insists that he prefers television to books and—after the tantalising disclosure that, but for Camus' untimely death, he might have filmed *The Fall*—replies to the question, 'Were you deeply read in existential philosophy?' with the answer, 'Very superficially.'

He views himself not as a camera but rather as a radar set. ('I pick up one thing or another and reflect it back in mirrored form, all jumbled up with memories, dreams and ideas.') To demonstrate this, he explains that Märta's much interpreted eczema in *Winter Light* was a realistic detail 'pinched straight from my second wife' and had nothing to do with Christian symbolism. In another, characteristically self-mocking answer, he tells why he selected Åke Grönberg to play the ageing circus proprietor in *Sawdust and Tinsel*: 'The first thing anyone making a portrait of himself does is to choose a little chap who is fat and strong, manic-depressive and anti-intellectual.'

Occasionally the darker side of Bergman rises briefly to the surface, though even then it is invoked with a lightness of style often lacking from the dialogue of his films. He remarks that his nightmares are 'always saturated with sunshine,' notes that his views of life, from being exceedingly dogmatic, have gradually dissolved, that he is now less afflicted by nostalgia and that as his technical assurance becomes greater, he leaves greater room for improvisation. (An early example of unplanned improvisation was the dance of death in *The Seventh Seal*, which was inspired by a cloud on the horizon: 'Some of the grips had to stand in, get some clothes on and dance along up there.') He gives the impression, above all, of an artist still growing and experimenting, generously dismissive of his early works (*Port of Call* is attributed to Rossellini, because 'I had no style of my own'), and more eager to move on than to look nostalgically back over his shoulder. Perhaps it's significant that he should see *A Passion*, just completed at the time of the interview, as the first of his films really to get to grips with the man-woman relationship.

Free from moral convolutions, Bergman's comments are also surprisingly terse, and one cause for complaint in *Bergman on Bergman* is its unusually high ratio of questions to answers—the interviewers' attempt to impose their critical superstructure on the director's assertion that his art is spontaneous and not theoretical. Another irritant is the English translation by Paul Britten Austin, Bergman's brother-in-law and author of the extremely readable *On Being Swedish*. Here he falls victim to a kind of translationese which suggests that he has spent too long among Swedish sociologists: offering us 'fictive', 'unveracity', 'three films as a suite', 'an aggression on', and, worst of all, 'a maturation process.'

JAN DAWSON

ALEXANDER DOVZHENKO: The Poet as Film-Maker

Edited, translated and with an Introduction by Marco Carynnyk

MIT PRESS, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS, AND LONDON, $8·95

Alexander Dovzhenko now seems a curiously distant figure. He died nearly twenty years ago and left no obvious artistic heirs; despite their devotion, the five films made from his unrealised scenarios by his widow and lifelong assistant, Julia Solntseva, seem like skeletal ground-plans of what Dovzhenko might have made himself. And yet he was one of the truly creative minds of cinema, the revolutionary poet who conceived the dances of life and death in *Earth*, that vision of the huge construction works glowing in the night in *Ivan*, the funeral procession through the flowers with the blazing countryside behind in *Shchors*.

Mr. Carynnyk's valuable book brings him sharply back into focus and into our consciousness, with an introductory essay mainly filling in Dovzhenko's background within the Ukrainian nationalist movements both before and after the October Revolution, as well as giving a concise critical re-evaluation of the films. Dovzhenko's own 'Autobiography' which follows is a mere 21 pages, and relates the films to some of the political events. Although he hints at the problems he had to face from the party machinery and personal vindictiveness, the real man is only fully revealed in the main section, comprising the Notebooks he kept from 1941 to 1956. (The English text, according to Mr. Carynnyk, is 'a collation of all available materials'; much of it has appeared in Soviet journals, though 'each publication was highly selective, containing many cuts.')

Dovzhenko: a self-portrait

We can now see what a marvellous writer he was, jotting down thoughts, ideas for scenarios and plays, scraps of observation, remembered conversations—all strung together in a stream of consciousness with a pearl or a stab in almost every paragraph. The sections dealing with the Second World War (when he was a war correspondent) combine an almost Goya-like awareness of the sheer physical waste of it all with a wry, very Russian view of time passing. (He quotes a partisan: 'We'll fight another two years or so and then the writers and the movies will show the war for another thirty years. To hell with it!') *Chronicle of the Flaming Years*, the script which emerged from these experiences, was only one of many projects rejected by the authorities in Dovzhenko's later years. After reading these notes, one can sense the great,

awesome fresco which might have emerged if he had made it himself. The section dealing with his last completed film *Michurin* (1949) is equally disturbing (though for different reasons) in its portrait of official obtuseness.

Dovzhenko clearly made things worse for himself by not accepting fools easily; and he could sometimes be as crude a tub-thumper as they were. Yet, over and over again, in the numerous one-page anecdotes, one has visions of marvellous unmade films, especially the story describing how his brother died after being rushed to a station with the father remembering how the horse continually tried to turn back 'because he sensed death.' In places, the notes turn into a lament for the wasted years fighting studio bureaucrats, 'party hacks', and 'pitiful wretches who hate me.' Short vituperative notes to Stalin abound, Mosfilm is referred to as 'that house of cretins where everything is twisted and perverted.' Best of all are the scabrous little pen-portraits: 'He was like a grand piano in which only three keys played notes. The rest issued orders.' Or the suggested hints on talking to superiors: 'Don't go to the trouble of shouting; please believe me when I say that even ordinary conversations with you always make me suffer.'

But, being Dovzhenko, these outbursts of anger and derision and visions of defeat were indissolubly linked with a fervent love for people and his native land. Towards the end, page after page is devoted to delirious descriptions of flying over the Dnieper and Kiev and the sights and sounds of life on the river banks, all waiting to be celebrated in his poems and songs and images about a country heaving itself alive again after the legacy of war.

Dovzhenko died from a heart attack in November 1956, on the eve of studio shooting for *Poem of the Sea*. His *cri de cœur* can be read as an elegy for all oppressed artists in both East and West. 'Today is the anniversary of my death. 31 January 1944 I was brought to the Kremlin. There I was hacked to pieces and the bloody fragments of my soul were thrown to the mob . . . I was killed by the hatred and evil of the great at the very moment when they were at their smallest.'

JOHN GILLETT

ADVENTURES WITH D. W. GRIFFITH

By Karl Brown

Edited and with an Introduction by Kevin Brownlow

SECKER AND WARBURG, £4.00

Karl Brown is a name from the days of D. W. Griffith legend. He was assistant cameraman on *Birth of a Nation* and *Intolerance*, moved on to become James Cruze's cameraman and to be an individualist director in his own right, and must have died (everyone said) some time in the Thirties. Kevin Brownlow was not entirely persuaded of this, since Brown's name had continued to appear on credits as a writer until 1953. Being nothing if not a practical film historian, he dedicated himself to a Philip Marlowe manhunt, which eventually, after months of detective work, ran down the quarry in North Hollywood, where Karl Brown was enjoying his fulfilled ambition of 'obscurity on a comfortable income.'

He had abandoned writing, he told Kevin Brownlow firmly and finally. . . But Brownlow's is an enthusiasm no more to be resisted than Brown's own unconquerable curiosity and vitality, and in no time at all the chapters started to arrive: 'Each chapter arrived on its own, impeccably typed, and so carefully structured that the term "editing" became a euphemism for a cosy afternoon's read.'

The first fruits (because there is another volume on the way about Famous Players, James Cruze, Roscoe Arbuckle *et al*) is *Adventures with D. W. Griffith*. It is something like a miracle, sixty years after, to discover someone who was, quite literally, by Griffith's side from the moment of his arrival in California (perky, 16-year-old Brown just walked up to Bitzer as he stepped off the train from the East, and asked him for a job), right through the making of the monuments. Not just anyone, though. Young Brown was making his own considerable contribution to the work, and was at the same time an acute, open-eyed, open-eared observer. The older Brown has a phenomenal memory (he refused to use reference books which might have distorted it) and a gift for vivid record.

Here is really what it was like. Griffith himself, with his actorish way of saying 'boom' for 'bomb' and 'gell' for 'girl'; his disconcerting habit of flinging himself without warning into wild gymnastics or an ill-voiced operatic aria on the set; his peculiar taste in hats; his airy-fairy way of floating around all aesthetic and demanding, 'Get me a peacock strutting on the green and spreading all his glory to the sun,' or 'Get me a spider, weaving her web, to snare unwary blunderers in the night'; or his more practical way of getting the best from his collaborators by setting them against each other in jealous rivalry. (It worked all too well in the case of Brown and the difficult Billy Bitzer, who eventually could not stand his worryingly ingenious young assistant.) In Brown's account Griffith is more eccentrically human than in all the other recollections; and funnier too.

Brown is uniquely equipped to assess Griffith's achievement, to which, in the enthusiasm of the moment, his admirers tended to add every innovation in film history. Griffith, says Brown, had learned over the years as a bad touring actor, to make them laugh, make them cry and make them wait. To this basic aesthetic he added a desperate will to make Art, and the blind all-or-nothing

Hollywood and After

The Changing Face of American Cinema

JERZY TOEPLITZ

Translated by Boleslaw Sulik

Jerzy Toeplitz describes the changing nature of the film industry and the complexities that have grown during the sixties and seventies inside Hollywood and the whole of the American film business. The film industry now forms only a small and secondary part of large diversified corporations and co-operates with the television industry, formerly its greatest rival. The main part of the book is concerned with artistic and creative questions and discusses the new values that film-goers demand now. The rose-tinted Hollywood dream has given way to the complicated, violent reality of American life.
£4.50

the history of the

British Film 1896~1918

volume one: 1896-1906 by Rachael Low and Roger Manvell

volume two: 1906-1914 by Rachael Low

volume three: 1914-1918 by Rachael Low

Together with volume four, which covers the period 1918-1929, these three volumes complete this celebrated history of the early British film.

'The kind of reference book which can be taken down from the shelves for pleasure and not simply for information.' Dilys Powell
'*Must* be acquired by all who are interested in films.' *Sight and Sound*
'The best history of a national film industry any country can boast.' *The Times Literary Supplement*

volume one: £3.50 illustrated
volume two: £4.75 illustrated
volume three: £5.25 illustrated
volume four: £7.35 illustrated

GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN

New Penguins for Film Buffs

THE FILM DIRECTOR AS SUPERSTAR
Joseph Gelmis
Sixteen new-style directors discuss frankly their attitudes to film, what it means to them, what they hope to achieve, their techniques and how they started filming. Pelican 75p

FILM AND REALITY: An Historical Survey
Roy Armes
Explores the varying relationships between image and reality in films from Lumière to the present, providing both an historical context and a critical framework. Pelican 45p

SIX EUROPEAN DIRECTORS: Essays on the Meaning of Film Style
Peter Harcourt
Looks with a sympathetic and well informed eye at selected moments from the work of six acknowledged masters of European cinema – Eisenstein, Renoir, Bunuel, Bergman, Fellini and Godard. Pelican 60p

UNDERGROUND FILM: A Critical History
Parker Tyler
A fascinating account of the variety of techniques, aims and influences involved in the underground film, from the early work of Bunuel through to Warhol and later. Pelican 75p

Available from all good booksellers, or in case of difficulty, from J. Barnicoat (Falmouth) Ltd, P O Box 11, Falmouth, Cornwall, enclosing 10p per volume postage and packing.

British Film Institute

offers for hire a

Preview Theatre

at Royalty House
72 Dean Street
London, W.1

The well appointed Viewing Theatre has facilities for: 35mm: Double-head projection, magnetic and optical; 200mil studio mag; 4 screen ratios: TV to 'scope. 16mm: Optical, Magnetic Stripe, Double-head, 5mil centre-track, cinemascope. All with high intensity ARC projection.

To book, 'phone Peter Flower, 01-437 4355 or write for prospectus: Administrative Officer, British Film Institute, 81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA.

Charges: £8.00 per hour 10.00-6.00 p.m. Mondays-Fridays. At other times by arrangement.

FILM DOPE

... JUST THE FACTS

A magazine series encompassing the whole spectrum of the movies

Each issue covers about 50 careers with detailed and complete filmographies plus an interview and many illustrations.

No. 5 (out July) ranges from:

Clyde Bruckman to Robert Breer, Louise Brooks to Geneviève Bujold, L-H. Burel to Michel Brault, Luis Buñuel to Tod Browning

Eventually DOPE will form the most exact and exhaustive film encyclopaedia ever. You had better start collecting now.

All correspondences and remittances to:-

FILM DOPE,

5, Norman Court, Little Heath, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 1HY, England.

Subscriptions for 4 issues: In UK £1.90; Abroad £2.50 or $6.00.
Back issues: In UK 55p; Abroad 60p or $1.50
Please state the issue number with which subscription is to commence.

Walter Lang remembers....

★The late Walter Lang made films in Hollywood for forty years. He directed *The Mighty Barnum, The Little Princess, Tin Pan Alley, Moon Over Miami, Sitting Pretty, Call Me Madam* and *The King and I*. He worked with Lombard, Barrymore, Temple, Grable, Faye, Fonda, Miranda, Merman, Monroe, Tracy, Hepburn, Sinatra and many other greats. In a fascinating interview (the last and probably only extensive one he ever gave), Walter Lang looks back on his career and the people he worked with. Read it in the summer issue of FOCUS ON FILM (No. 18), plus an interview with Maureen O'Sullivan and other features. Price 40p ($1.50) from Tantivy Press, 108 New Bond Street, London W1Y 0QX. Or from usual outlets.

SIGHT AND SOUND BINDERS

available at £1.20 ($3.25) inc. postage. Each binder holds eight copies, and is finished in blue with gold lettering.

British Film Institute, Publications Department, 81 Dean Street, London, W1V 6AA

nerve that it took to persist with *Birth of a Nation* and then with *Intolerance*.

The whole world of Griffith's Hollywood comes to life: the names on the credits will never again be only names, but vivid personages like 'Fireworks' Wilson, the one-armed crazed pyrotechnics man, and 'Spec' (for Perspective) Hall, the art director on *Intolerance* who created all Babylon freehand, with an uncanny gift for estimating scale to the narrowest limit. *Art director*? Of course he wasn't called that, but that is what he was, and Brown can tell us exactly how he worked, and how those sets were built, down to the last nail and plaster skim. No one before him has told with quite such precision how things were done in those days, at the start of history. As Bitzer's assistant, he also combined the jobs of clapper boy and script girl; and is interested enough to tell us in exact detail how a shot was set up and lined up and slated.

He can tell us with particular authority how the process shots were done, because with his persistent ingenuity he invented and did most of them. He was so good that Griffith got him special leave from the army to do the opening shot of *Broken Blossoms*, the mysterious, misty, Whistler impression of Limehouse Reach, which for fifty years has gone down in history as one of Bitzer's finest moments (which is a shame for Bitzer, whose accomplishment was magnificent enough to be admired without confusion).

Even so, the merit of the book is not so much in what Karl Brown tells as the way he tells it—the vigour and charm and comedy and actuality of the writing. There is none of the soft sentimental haze of an old man's memories; just the energy of contemporary record, bringing it all to life. His description of the première of *Birth of a Nation* is stunning, recreating once and for always the impact on its first audience, who saw it with all the spectacular presentation of orchestra and sound effects, with the sentiments still fresh and overwhelming.

Film history has a new debt to Kevin Brownlow, in his special role as the mischievous goblin who will not let old men rest, but must charm them back to their youth.

DAVID ROBINSON

DON'T LOOK AT THE CAMERA

By Harry Watt

PAUL ELEK, £3.50

Harry Watt is so different from the other early members of the British Documentary Movement, the only obvious outright extrovert without apparent intellectual ambitions in the group, that the puzzle is how he got taken on in the first place, let alone remaining in documentary for ten years (1932–42). Watt's own theory is that Grierson hired him because Grierson was mad about the sea and Watt, among other youthful adventures, had sailed the Atlantic as a deckhand on a Newfoundland schooner. It could be. It could also be that Grierson, who was no fool despite being an intellectual, detected in Watt's description of that quite crazy voyage something of the prodigious journalistic talent now so clearly in evidence in his memoirs, *Don't Look at the Camera*.

Watt's reminiscences about his life up to the time he left documentary make compulsive reading, because he sees everything in terms of action. The book is full of phrases like, 'I took it, because I wanted to make the picture, but that wasn't all I was to have to take from the bastard.' Occasionally the reporting cuts deeper: 'What happened then has often come back to me, sometimes in dreams. Everyone stopped firing, and we could see the young German—it was only about seventy yards away, so we could see he was young—frantically trying to crawl from the fire that was beginning to reach for him. But obviously his legs were paralysed, and he could not move himself. The flames began to lick around him, and he started to scream. The officer-in-charge of the Commandos asked for volunteers to go and rescue him, but no one moved . . . I still think I should have done it. I also think I would have been killed. It was a long moment as the officer looked along the line of us, and then, slowly turning away as though accepting our verdict, he shot the young German dead.'

This is the very stuff of documentary, but not of course acceptable in either the war propaganda films that Watt was making at the time, or the entertainment features of the Forties and Fifties to which he graduated at (dare I suggest?) the first practicable opportunity; that is, when the war made it suddenly possible to work in a realistic vein inside the industry.

Accustomed as we are to having the documentary idea presented to us in terms of the utmost seriousness, as an exercise in either aesthetic exploration or public service or both, Watt's blunt, often wildly funny attitude catches us up like a gust of fresh air. We must, however, bear in mind that this is primarily Watt's own story and, as he points out in the last paragraph, 'in no way a history of the documentary film movement.' In fact, the other members of the movement flit through its pages like subsidiary characters in a rather racy thriller, whose separate lives and motives do not require to be understood except as they affect the hero's progress—and Watt can be pretty cruel. Arthur Elton, he writes, 'obviously disliked people.' Basil Wright 'had the misfortune to be rich, which I have always felt to be a drawback to a creative artist. Like hungry boxers are the best boxers.' Stuart Legg 'was brilliant, skilful and dull.'

Well, all this is really very much in the eye of the beholder, and the odd thing is that larger revelations are missing. Watt seems not to have been personally involved in the political manœuvres that went on behind the scenes in documentary, but it is surprising that he withholds comment on them altogether. He is curiously reticent even about Cavalcanti (whom he enormously admired) and the well-known difference of opinion between Cavalcanti and Grierson in the late Thirties. The precise nature of the division that the movement had sustained by 1937, when Grierson and his closest associates (notably Elton, Wright and Legg) left the GPO Film Unit, remains shrouded in mystery. There can only be one explanation for this. Watt, despite a few jibes and jokes at the expense of former associates, has fundamentally remained true to the loyalties of a movement that actually split, both physically and ideologically, in the late Thirties, but which, notwithstanding the death of Grierson, preserves to this day its aura of never having broken up. All things considered, that is probably how it should be.

ELIZABETH SUSSEX

Letters

Polonsky and Scott

SIR,—I wonder why you have made no comment upon two important and neglected recent films. I refer to *Rage* by George C. Scott and *Romance of a Horse Thief* by Abraham Polonsky. Both excellent films were shown in Helsinki some time ago, *Romance* at the end of 1971, *Rage* at the beginning of 1973. I am aware of Polonsky's beautiful reminiscence 'Making Movies' in the Spring 1971 SIGHT AND SOUND. After this essay there has been no word about him nor his film in your quarterly. *Romance* is a worthy successor to *Force of Evil* and *Willie Boy*, a tender, comic love story, a Yiddish picaresque tale, and an impressionistic piece of pre-revolutionary nostalgia. Polonsky would be the true and only director to film Malamud's *The Assistant*.

Rage surely is one of the most promising first films made in the States in the Seventies, in the class of *When the Legends Die*, *Bad Company* and *Duel*. George C. Scott's anti-military fury is admirably under control: the director (and star) has never recourse to a merely verbal rebellion. Instead of sermons Scott gives us a harrowing testimony on the consequences of military logic in terms of human life and human suffering. Well, you ought to say it better. . .

May I add that I have subscribed to SIGHT AND SOUND for 20 years and that I admire it very much.

Yours faithfully,

MATTI SALO

Helsinki, Finland.

Neither *Romance of a Horse Thief* nor *Rage* has yet had a screening in Britain. It is an interesting comment on present distribution patterns that a new film with an established star (Yul Brynner is in *Horse Thief*) and a first film by an established star should be more readily available in Helsinki than in London.—EDITOR

Project Octopus

SIR,—I was delighted to read the report in the Spring issue of SIGHT AND SOUND on Project Octopus by Liberation Films. It was an extraordinarily successful project, and the film *Starting to Happen* is certainly more revealing in illustrating the processes of a community learning to use and express themselves with portable video than the well-known *VTR St. Jacques* by the National Film Board of Canada.

However, I was disappointed that there was no mention in the article that Project Octopus was grant-aided by the Greater London Arts Association. I would have thought it was an ideal opportunity for SIGHT AND SOUND to remind its readers, and members of the BFI, how the Institute is financially helping the Regional Arts Associations further the development of film and video activities, even if these funds are still totally inadequate to service their needs. This is particularly true in Greater London with a region covering 32 boroughs and 8 million people.

Over the past three years the Association's Film and Video Advisory Panel has struggled hard to establish a policy of grant-aiding; advising and stimulating film and video activity in the community, because it not only seemed the most valuable but also the most neglected area in need of support —*and no one else was doing it*!

Yours faithfully,

KEITH M. GRIFFITHS,
Film and Video Officer
Greater London Arts Association.

Screen Cops

SIR,—It would be interesting to hear why Philip French in his recent article 'Cops' chose to ignore the regular series of police films made specifically for television. I would be the first to admit the difference between the two media, but these films, unlike their British counterparts, are made entirely

cinematically in film studios by film companies. In fact the director of photography on some of the best films in the very popular series *Colombo*, starring Peter Falk, was none other than Russell Metty, a cinematographer who has worked continuously in Hollywood for the past forty years, working on most of the Douglas Sirk films of the fifties and winning an Oscar for his contribution to *Spartacus* in 1960.

Of all the television films, *Colombo* is perhaps unique in contradicting most of the essential features discussed by Mr French. The business of detection in the traditional private-eye manner is central, and there is no time spent in discussing what it means to be a police officer, although Colombo is a homicide lieutenant on the force.

The series follows a clearly defined formula. During the first twenty-five minutes the audience sees the murder committed, thus learning the identity of the criminal (always, incidentally, a wealthy person of high social status) before the detective. After the crime is discovered Colombo is on the scene asking stupid questions in an exaggerated absent-minded manner, but none the less going about the business of detection. From there onwards he continues to needle the suspect until sure of his guilt. At which point the suspect becomes aware that Colombo is not so stupid after all and there follows a cat and mouse battle of wits until Colombo finally tricks the criminal into confession. The films present a subtle, and I would suggest more cinematic inversion of the proven detective formula in which the reader is encouraged to play detective.

I mention these brief points because I believe it important that the film critic should seriously consider whether he can ignore current films made specifically for television, merely because they are screened on television.

Yours faithfully,
KEN SPARNE

Bradford, 6.

Nazi Films

SIR,—I have just read Penelope Houston's article 'Witnesses of War' in SIGHT AND SOUND with interest and enjoyment. She asks a question on p. 112 in the paragraph before last ('Though who actually saw these German films, and how general was their distribution?'), and may be interested to have an answer which is of course not comprehensive.

I came to this country in 1939 and was brought up in Germany until I was thirteen. I lived in Essen opposite a large exhibition hall called the 'Gruga'; I had a season ticket and often went to all sorts of exhibitions—one had a continuous film show, free, and I went in. I still remember the film though I can't remember the title: it was about mentally handicapped and psychotic people, and the point the film made was that Jews contributed more than their share to the number of the 'degenerate'—I can't remember if the film actually advocated extermination, but it certainly made an enormous impression on a thirteen-year-old Jewish boy!

Yours faithfully,
CHARLES HANNAM

Bristol, BS8 1JA

Distributor for Herzog

SIR,—With reference to your note in the last issue of SIGHT AND SOUND about the BFI's 'Special Mention' award to Werner Herzog, we would like to answer your question 'Is there a distributor in the house?' The answer is, 'Yes, there is'—two of his features, *Even Dwarfs Started Small* and *Signs of Life*, are in distribution in this country with The Other Cinema. We hope to make *Fata Morgana* available later this year.

Yours faithfully,
THE OTHER CINEMA

12-13 Little Newport Street,
London, WC2H 7JJ

Siddhartha

SIR,—A pedantic little correction to 'Film Guide' in the Spring SIGHT AND SOUND. *Siddhartha* was not an 'early novel' of Hesse, but right in the middle (1922) of his long career as a novelist.

Yours faithfully,
J. C. MAXWELL

Oxford, OX1 3BJ

NOTES ON CONTRIBUTORS

TIMOTHY HYMAN is a painter, who emerged from the Slade in 1967 and now lectures at the Working Men's College and elsewhere . . . PAUL MADDEN is Television Officer of the National Film Archive and is currently organising a season of TV drama at the NFT. . . DEREK MALCOLM is Film Critic of the *Guardian* . . . JAMES MONACO has written for the *New York Times*, *Take One* and *Film Comment* and is working on a book about Truffaut and Godard to be called *Method and Sentiment* . . . VINCENT PORTER is Principal Lecturer in Film at the Polytechnic of Central London and co-author of *A Long Look at Short Films*, published by Pergamon in 1967 . . . DAI VAUGHAN is a documentary film editor working in television . . . VICTORIA WEGG-PROSSER is Documentary Acquisitions Officer of the NFA and is working on an Open University Ph.D. thesis, *British Newsreels in the Thirties*.

Sight and Sound

Recent increases in printing, paper and postage costs have made an increase in the price of SIGHT AND SOUND unavoidable. With effect from this issue, the subscription rates will be £2.00 for one year and £3.80 for two years. Single copies will cost 40p from bookshops and newsagents, and 50p by post from the British Film Institute, Publications Department, 81 Dean Street, London W1V 6AA. In the United States the cost per copy remains $1.50.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

COLUMBIA-WARNER for *The Dark Tower, The Last Detail, The Reckoning, Easy Rider, Drive, He Said, The King of Marvin Gardens.*
CIC for *The Passenger, Ulzana's Raid.*
EMI for *Murder on the Orient Express, Dillinger, Golden Swallow, Intimate Confessions of a Chinese Courtesan, The New One-Armed Swordsman.*
FOX-RANK for *Lacombe Lucien, Kid Blue.*
UNITED ARTISTS for *Sleeper.*
CINERAMA for *The Grissom Gang.*
GALA FILM DISTRIBUTORS for 8½.
GRAND NATIONAL for *The Terror.*
THE OTHER CINEMA for *Bof!*
TARGET INTERNATIONAL for *Hellfighters of the East.*
CATHAY FILMS/MIKE JONES for *Way of the Dragon, Beach of the War Gods.*
PARAMOUNT PICTURES for *The Conversation, The Longest Yard.*
MARA-FILMS/JAQUES-HENRI LARTIGUE for *Lancelot du Lac.*
GREENWICH FILM PRODUCTION for *Le Fantôme de la Liberté.*
TANGO FILM for *Angst essen Seele auf.*
TERRA-FILM for *L'Homme sans Visage.*
THOMAS KOERFER PRODUCTIONS for *The Death of the Director of the Flea Circus.*
DIETER GEISSLER FILM PRODUCTION for *Steppenwolf.*
BUZZY ENTERPRISES for *A Bigger Splash.*
MERCHANT-IVORY PRODUCTIONS for *The Autobiography of a Princess.*
MONTE HELLMAN/JACK NICHOLSON PRODUCTIONS for *Ride in the Whirlwind.*
BBC-TV for *Stocker's Copper, The Lump, The Gangster Show.*
HARLECH TELEVISION for *Catholics.*
DANISH FILM MUSEUM for *The Parson's Widow.*
SWEDISH FILM INSTITUTE/ANNA-LENA WIBOM for *The Prisoner of Karlsten's Fortress, Thomas Graal's Best Child, Gunnar Hede's Saga, Ingeborg Holm, His Grace's Last Testament.*
NATIONAL FILM ARCHIVE for *Vampyr, The Passion of Joan of Arc, Day of Wrath, The Right Spirit, Dovzhenko self-portrait.*

CORRESPONDENTS

HOLLYWOOD: Axel Madsen
ITALY: Giulio Cesare Castello
FRANCE: Gilles Jacob, Rui Nogueira
SCANDINAVIA: Ib Monty
SPAIN: Francisco Aranda
INDIA: Amita Malik

PRINTED BY The Whitefriars Press Ltd., London and Tonbridge, England.

BLOCKS by Lennard and Erskine, London.

SOLE AGENTS for U.S.A.: Eastern News Distributors, 155 West 15th Street, New York 10011.

ANNUAL SUBSCRIPTION RATES (4 issues) £2.00 including postage. Back issues 35p plus 10p postage. U.S.A.: $6. Price per copy in United States, $1.50. Back issues $1.75. Binders to hold two years issues £1.20 ($3.25).

PUBLICATION DATES: 1st January, 1st April, 1st July, and 1st October.

Overseas Editions: 12th of these months.

My monthly
For Sale Lists of Books and Magazines
on the
Cinema and Theatre
always include scarce items.

A year's subscription costs 60p in Great Britain & Eire; £1.00 any European country: $5.00 U.S.A. (airmail).

". . . all at extremely reasonable prices."
International Film Guide

A. E. COX (Dept. SS)
21 Cecil Road, Itchen, Southampton, SO2 7HX
(Tel: 0703-447989)

Ad Mercatum Iste Porcellus

Cinema & television history, pre-history & theory, avant-garde, arriere-garde & partout-garde—Books, magazines, stills, posters, memorabilia in English & many other languages. Also, old photography, historical & rare material. Catalog $1

ALSO

CTVD: Cinema-Television Digest: quarterly review in English of serious foreign-language cinema & TV press. $3 yearly USA, $4 elsewhere.

HAMPTON BOOKS Rt. 1, BOX 76, NEWBERRY, S.C. 29108, USA. Tel.: (803) 276-6870

DON'T LOOK AT THE CAMERA

Harry Watt

The irreverent memoirs of the man who made TARGET FOR TONIGHT, NIGHT MAIL, NORTH SEA *etc.*

"Read all about it in this frank, enthusiastic, irascible book. . . I don't think you will waste your money or your time. I am all for *Don't Look at the Camera*." DILYS POWELL

Illustrated £3.50

Paul Elek Ltd
54-58 Caledonian Rd, London N1 9RN

bfi

Inside every film review there's some factual information trying to get out. . . . Most of it gets into the

Monthly Film Bulletin

Reviews, synopses and full credits of every feature film released in Great Britain

Subscription rates: £2.50/$6.75 per year, inclusive of postage. Reduced rates for full members of the British Film Institute

Specimen copy sent on request

Published by the
BRITISH FILM INSTITUTE
PUBLICATIONS DEPARTMENT (SS)
81 DEAN STREET
LONDON W1V 6AA

THERE MUST BE A LONE RANGER

Jenni Calder

A perceptive analysis of Westerns for the enthusiast and an interesting exploration of the potency of the Western myth as a historical force.

Jenni Calder examines the variations of treatment and emphasis which have developed and sheds a new light on the underlying instincts of present day America.

£3.95

Hamish Hamilton

h|h

FILM GUIDE

AFFAIR, THE (*Scotia-Barber*)
An excruciatingly ill-fated affair (divorced lawyer and polio victim songwriter), doomed as much by the morosely plodding, tele-play style of Gilbert Cates' direction as by the romantic incompatibilities of Natalie Wood and Robert Wagner. (Bruce Davison).

***BILLY TWO HATS**
(*United Artists*)
Interesting foray out West by Alan Sharp, who gives an obsessive cast to the unstable partnerships and the racial conflicts. But most of it goes for nothing through inaptly picturesque direction and inadequate performances. (Gregory Peck, Desi Arnaz Jr; director, Ted Kotcheff.)

***BLAZING SADDLES**
(*Columbia-Warner*)
The Mel Brooks joke machine travels West, making the most of the movie parodies and the comedy revue 'shticks' but lacking in momentum and really coming unstuck with its shaggy dog ending. (Cleavon Little, Gene Wilder, Slim Pickens.) *Reviewed.*

****BLUME IN LOVE**
(*Columbia-Warner*)
A Paul Mazursky morality play about the lives and loves of well-to-do Southern Californians, much sharper than *Bob and Carol and Ted and Alice* and nicely enacted by a woebegone George Segal on a Grand Tour of passion. (Susan Anspach, Kris Kristofferson.)

BUSTING (*United Artists*)
Two Californian cops up against the System and the Syndicate. The clichés are stirred to life by the partnership of Robert Blake and Elliott Gould but not by the overworked style of ex-TV director Peter Hyams. (Allen Garfield.)

***CALLAN** (*EMI*)
For a TV spin-off, remarkably watchable. The territory is familiar—ageing secret agent struggles on alone in a world of double-cross and disillusionment—but both script and characterisations have an edge of freshness, and Don Sharp does a good, efficient job of directing. (Edward Woodward, Carl Mohner, Eric Porter.)

CAT AND MOUSE (*EMI*)
Psychological thriller with pretensions, about a sorely troubled biology teacher (Kirk Douglas, unhappily playing against type) who takes his scalpel on a murderous rampage when his wife divorces him. Daniel Petrie pulls out all the Freudian stops, and only manages to dissect the suspense. (Jean Seberg, John Vernon.)

***CHINESE VENGEANCE**
(*EMI*)
Swordplay and blood-brotherhood betrayed in Ching Dynasty China. The versatile Chang Cheh directs his true story as a critique of personal ambition and state complicity in corruption, with a flashback structure of luminous precision and sobriety. (David Chiang, Ti Lung, Ching Li.)

****CONVERSATION, THE** (*CIC*)
Coppola's account of the tribulations of a professional eavesdropper, who fears his bugging may lead to a murder. Not a Watergate film, but a private, hallucinatory study in technical expertise and lonely guilt; brilliantly manoeuvred and extremely impressive, even if some of the plot details may drive you wild. (Gene Hackman, Cindy Williams.) *Reviewed.*

DEAD CERT (*United Artists*)
The strength of Dick Francis' spirited racing thrillers is their authentic background detail, but in this risible adaptation the solecisms fall thicker than the nobbled nags—including having the villain impaled on spiked railings while riding in the Grand National. Tony Richardson finds the going more than sticky. (Scott Antony, Judi Dench, Michael Williams.)

DEADLY TRACKERS, THE
(*Columbia-Warner*)
Pacifist US sheriff takes up arms to avenge his family. The vestige of reason that lurks behind Lukas Heller's muddy script (over-schematic and random by turns) and Richard Harris' all-but-pastiche-Brando performance is doubtless the ghost of Sam Fuller's aborted *Riata*, here betrayed as surely as is director Barry Shear's manifest talent. (Rod Taylor, Al Lettieri.)

****DILLINGER** (*EMI*)
John Milius' flamboyantly baroque extension of the movies' current mythomania. John Dillinger and his arch-enemy of the FBI assume god-like proportions through their sublime egotism, scattering mere mortals like nine-pins. The rituals of aggression and repression are rounded out with a fittingly violent formality. (Warren Oates, Ben Johnson, Cloris Leachman.) *Reviewed.*

***GREAT GATSBY, THE** (*CIC*)
Fitzgerald's classic recreated in lumpish period detail. Jack Clayton soberly catalogues Gatsby's largesse, but fails to find room for the personal perspectives of the poor little rich boy, his disabused observer, or Fitzgerald's own West-meets-East viewpoint. (Robert Redford, Mia Farrow, Bruce Dern, Scott Wilson, Sam Waterston.) *Reviewed.*

****HOUSE OF MADNESS**
(*Pan-European*)
Strikingly inventive Mexican adaptation of Poe's *System of Doctor Tarr and Professor Fether*. A little wild and woolly (possibly the fault of the dubbed dialogue), but it has a genuine tang of surrealist poetry. (Claudio Brook, Martin Lasalle; director, Juan López Moctezuma.)

HUCKLEBERRY FINN
(*United Artists*)
Dismal attempt to repeat the spontaneity of *Tom Sawyer*, resulting in a hard grind where even the songs are down-trodden. The smarmy attitude to slavery is particularly hard to take. (Jeff East, Paul Winfield, Harvey Korman; director, J. Lee Thompson.)

***I ESCAPED FROM DEVIL'S ISLAND** (*United Artists*)
Exploitations's own *Papillon* (storyline almost identical), mercifully free from big brother's portentousness. Tough and not exactly sparing with the sadism, it moves along at a fine pace, but is hampered by some embarrassingly risible dialogue. (Jim Brown, Christopher George; director, William Witney.)

I'M JUMPING OVER PUDDLES AGAIN
(*Contemporary*)
Sentimental Czech moral tale about a boy's fight to conquer polio. Pretty pastoral padding fills out a spare narrative, though it works well enough as a dreamy evocation of childhood innocence. (Vladimir Dlouhy, Karel Hlusicka; director, Karel Kachyna.)

INVESTIGATION OF MURDER, AN (*Fox-Rank*)
A semi-documentary attempt to set the record straight on *Dirty Harry*, failing to convert Walter Matthau and Bruce Dern into policemen and cemented with local colour and a scrambled plot. (Lou Gossett, Anthony Zerbe; director, Stuart Rosenberg.)

****JUVENILE COURT**
(*The Other Cinema*)
Frederick Wiseman's *cinéma-vérité* investigation of a Tennessee court for juvenile offenders enjoyed unusual freedom of access, extending to the judge's private chambers. The resulting material is remarkable, and makes his honourable untendentiousness the more striking; no artificial drama, always specific rather than general, no easy conclusions.

****KID BLUE** (*Fox-Rank*)
Contemporary fable in a Western setting, about an outlaw (Dennis Hopper) who tries to drop-in, only to find that society, in the shape of Sheriff Mean John Simpson (Ben Johnson), isn't having any. (Warren Oates, Janice Rule, Peter Boyle; director, James Frawley.) *Reviewed.*

****LACOMBE LUCIEN** (*Fox-Rank*)
Louis Malle's wonderfully calm and compassionate (though never complaisant) study of a seventeen-year-old peasant boy who drifts into collaboration during the last weeks of the German Occupation. Outdoes even *Le Souffle au Coeur* in the acute observation of social and psychological detail behind an adolescent's growing up. (Pierre Blaise, Aurore Clément, Holger Lowenadler.) *Reviewed.*

****LAST DETAIL, THE**
(*Columbia-Warner*)
Anchored by a first-class script, Hal Ashby's fascination with odd encounters and their liberating effects pays handsome dividends—without the cuteness that marred *The Landlord* and *Harold and Maude*—in this ruthlessly witty morality about two shore patrolmen who take pity on their prisoner, encourage him to revolt, and never realise the extent to which they themselves are prisoners. (Jack Nicholson, Otis Young, Randy Quaid.) *Reviewed.*

***LOVE ME GENTLY** (*Butcher's*)
The arbitrary export title conceals Robert Van Ackeren's *Harlis*, a peculiarly Teutonic comedy of *l'amour fou* and lust, narcissism and jealousy. The optimum tone of cliché decadence isn't sustained, but the blend of kitsch, deadpan, Art Deco and sheer grotesque is never less than bizarre. (Ulli Lommel, Mascha Rabben, Gabi Larifari.)

MAME (*Columbia-Warner*)
'Musical' adaptation of Patrick Dennis' sugary homage to his eccentric aunt, in which the cast seem to have been handpicked for their tone-deafness and Lucille Ball's close-ups are shot blatantly out of focus. Like *Gatsby*, it makes one irrationally nostalgic for the earlier version. (Robert Preston, Bea Arthur; director, Gene Saks.)

****MISSISSIPPI MERMAID**
(*United Artists*)
Truffaut's superbly arranged marriage of the romantic idealist with the gold-digger who does him wrong, with some graceful allusions to Hitchcock by courtesy of William Irish. Little affected by the time lag in its arrival but scarred by dubbing and cutting. (Jean-Paul Belmondo, Catherine Deneuve, Michel Bouquet.)

****OUTSIDE MAN, THE**
(*United Artists*)
Neat, intelligently plotted little thriller about an imported killer (Jean-Louis Trintignant) baffled not only by the realisation that he is to be killed after fulfilling his contract, but by the strange language, layout and *mores* of Los Angeles. Excellent performances, locations and dialogue. (Ann-Margret, Roy Scheider, Angie Dickinson; director, Jacques Deray.)

****PANDEMONIUM** (*Amanda*)
Exceptionally bloody Kabuki play, set entirely at night, mounted with great fidelity by Toshio Matsumoto as a dispassionate analysis of the hell of human passions. The crescendo of horrors balances precisely between realism and metaphor thanks to a masterfully disciplined form. (Katsuo Nakamura, Yasuko Sanjo, Juro Kira.)

****RAMPARTS OF CLAY**
(*Contemporary*)
Almost wordless study of life in a Tunisian village, centred on a rebellious orphan girl and a strike of stone-breakers. Based on a book by the sociologist Jean Duvignaud, and somewhat awkwardly oscillating between documentary and fiction, but unsentimental, superbly shot and paced to the rhythm of the village. (Leila Schenna; director, Jean-Louis Bertucelli.)

****SLEEPER** (*United Artists*)
Woody Allen tries out the future and produces his most consistently visual and busily funny comedy to date—even if he still contains a legion of comics, from TV chat artist to silent comedian-*manqué*, clamouring for screen time. (Diane Keaton.) *Reviewed.*

****SPIKES GANG, THE**
(*United Artists*)
A sequel in all but name to *Bad Company*, with three boys tutored in crime—and led to disaster—by ageing outlaw Lee Marvin. Familiar territory, but pleasantly covered in the company of Richard Fleischer's relaxed direction, an acute script and an excellent cast. (Gary Grimes, Ron Howard, Charlie Martin Smith.)

****SUGARLAND EXPRESS, THE**
(*CIC*)
Ace in the Hole meets *Vanishing Point* as a young couple, hounded by police and well-wishers, take to the road to rescue their baby from Welfare. Curiously soft-centred but likeable, with fine performances. (Goldie Hawn, William Atherton, Michael Sacks; director, Steven Spielberg.)

***SPRING INTO SUMMER**
(*Gala*)
The splendours and miseries of village life as a busty wench, in the quietly lyrical summertime, sets her marriage sights on a dour fiancé but enjoys deflowerment by a more personable seducer. Appealingly 'naturalistic' in the Pagnol manner, but rather flat. (Annie Colé, Frédéric Duru; director, Pascal Thomas.)

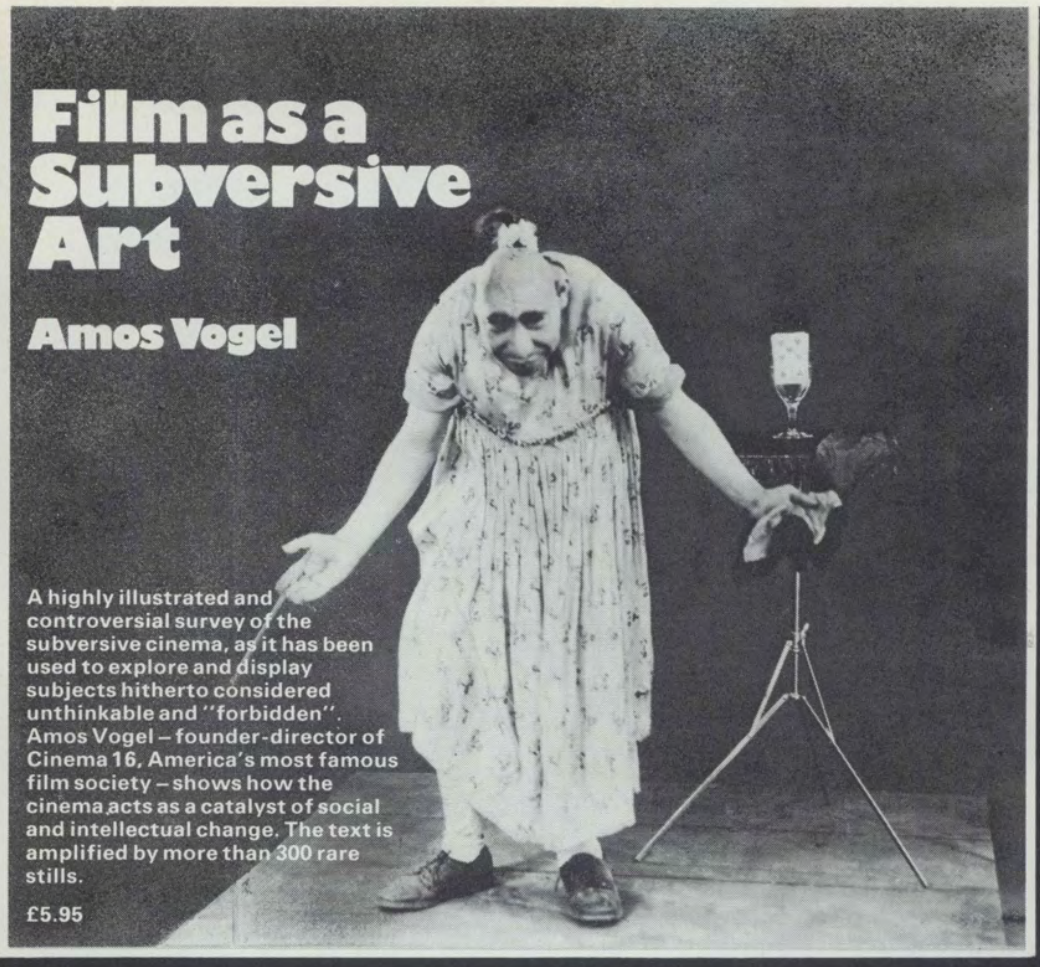
***S*P*Y*S** (*EMI*)
Irvin Kershner takes advantage of a rambling plot to turn up *tour de force* scenes of knockabout confusion, and Donald Sutherland and Elliott Gould are inventively paired; but this secret agent spoof seems to have arrived several years too late to find its true niche. (Joss Ackland, Zouzou.) *Reviewed.*

****W** (*Nationwide*)
TV-type drama skilfully plotted to come full circle, nicely and anonymously performed (with the exception of Twiggy's rag-doll heroine), and quite the best in its sour little way of the Vietnam-veterans-on-the-rampage cycle. (Michael Witney, John Vernon; director, Richard Quine.)

****WHAT?** (*Gala*)
Sadly underrated Polanski film. Jokingly inconsequential in his *Dance of the Vampires* mood, with a modern Alice trying to retain her modesty (if not her virtue) in a wonderland of crazy perverts, it also juggles a graceful series of paradoxes about the sad perception that art and life so seldom coincide. (Sydne Rome, Marcello Mastroianni, Hugh Griffith.)

Film as a Subversive Art

Amos Vogel



A highly illustrated and controversial survey of the subversive cinema, as it has been used to explore and display subjects hitherto considered unthinkable and "forbidden". Amos Vogel – founder-director of Cinema 16, America's most famous film society – shows how the cinema acts as a catalyst of social and intellectual change. The text is amplified by more than 300 rare stills.

£5.95

The Complete Films of EISENSTEIN

together with an unpublished essay by Eisenstein which throws new light on his technique

A vivid pictorial study of the work of Russia's foremost film director, containing 250 stills from Eisenstein's ten great films. The beautifully reproduced plates – selected from the Avant-Scène Cinéma archives with the help of the Eisenstein Memorial Centre in Moscow – are mostly frame enlargements which have been left untouched to preserve their authenticity as action pictures.

Commentary by Abraham Segal

£4.50

Weidenfeld & Nicolson

THE ACADEMY CINEMAS

will present

Claude Faraldo's BOF

AND

Roger Corman's GAS